

SOME
DISCOURSES,
WHEREIN

The BEING of GOD, and of his
WATCHFUL PROVIDENCE over
all his Creatures; as the first Princi-
ples of ALL RELIGION, whether
Revealed or Natural, are asserted and
maintained.

To which is added,

A DISCOURSE shewing the Danger of
INFIDELITY and LIBERTINISM,
to the CHRISTIAN RELIGION in
particular.

*The Works of the Lord are great, worthy to be praised
and had in Honour.—And they ought to be had
in Remembrance, Psalm cxi. 3, 4.*

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Sarum.

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DISCOURSES

W H L E I N

THE BEING OF GOD, AND
W A T C H M A N

all his Creatures, and the
of a
Revealed or
narrated



A DISCOURSE
to the
particular

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S E R M O N I.

The Existence of a G O D.

HEBREWS XI. part of Verse the 6th.

— *He who cometh to God, must believe that He is* —

TH E Apostle, in this Chapter, after S E R M. I. having shewn the Nature of Faith in general, verses the 1, 2. declared the Necessity of it also, in the Verse whereof my Text is a part; he then demonstrated, more at large, the Prerogatives, and the excellent Fruits thereof, and its wonderful Effects, in the times of old; and this he did, throughout the whole Chapter. Thus, as to the Thing so largely discoursed of, he describes it in these words: *Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen.* And then, as for its absolute Necessity also, that is grounded upon this Foundation; *that without Faith it is impossible to please God,* and for that reason it is so: because as it immediately follows — *He who cometh to God, must (first) believe that he is;* or be convinced that there is a God, to whom he may accede, or come, as to a most bountiful Benefactor, and as to a just Judge also. From the Words thus opened,

B

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S E R M. ed, it is evident, that Faith in God is a funda-

I. mental Principle of all Religion, whether natural or revealed ; and that the firm Belief of the Existence of a Deity is that, upon which Faith in God necessarily resteth, or depends : Because *he that cometh to God, must* (antecedently to his so coming) *believe that he is ;* or otherwise he is a mere Infidel, and as such, he only mocketh God, whom such a miscreant can never please. No, it is utterly impossible, (as before in our Apostle's Judgment) for *he who cometh to God,* [to worship, to serve, honour, and obey him] *must believe that he is.* And the Evidence of the Existence of a God over all, as the first Cause, and the last End of all things, is so clear, and strong, that none but a Fool can think there is no God ; *Psal. liii. 1.* And therefore, in order to shew you the Wisdom of believing in *one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible,* which is the first Article of our Creed, because, (as I said before) it is the Foundation of all Religion. I shall endeavour,

First, To shew the Reasonableness of our believing that God is, or that there is a God ; the Creator of all things, and in whom all things consist ; and by whose Almighty Power, and Providence, they are all upheld, and supported ; and Whose therefore is the Greatness, and the Power, the Glory, and the Majesty. Then

Secondly, I shall further shew, as the necessary Consequence of my Argument foregoing, that, in the very Reason of Things, Infidelity

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lity is utterly inexcusable, in any one, who SERM.
hath the Use of his Reason, and yet winks I.
hard against even sensible Conviction. 

Thirdly and Lastly, I shall close all up with an earnest Exhortation to you all, to believe in God, and to fear, honour, serve, and obey him. Who is not only a Rewarder of all who diligently seek him; but a God also, that judgeth in the Earth, and to whom Vengeance and Recompence do belong, as to his Enemies, or to reward [or punish] all who hate him. I am

First, To shew the Reasonableness of our believing that God is, or that there is a God; the Creator of all things, and in whom all things consist; and by whose Almighty Power and Providence all they are upheld, and supported; and whose therefore is the Greatness, and the Power, the Glory, and the Majesty.

But before I come to make proof of the Existence of a God, or particularly to shew the Reasons which induce us to believe that *he is*; I in general observe; *First*, that as to *coming to God*, it imports Worship and Service, and Obedience to his Commands. He then, who, in that view, cometh to God, must believe *that he is*; as otherwise it is (as the Apostle affirms) *impossible to please God*; and not only so, but his coming, and not believing at the same time, implies a Contradiction. Again,

Secondly, I observe, That Faith, by which one believes that God is, imports a thorough Perswasion of the Truth of that Proposition in particular, as well as of all others which are necessary

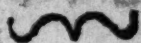
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S E R M. unto Salvation, and, as such, are well-pleasing unto God, as being conformable unto his Will and I. Laws. Having premised this by way of Explanation of the Words before us ; I come to the direct Proof of this Proposition, *That God is*, or that there is but one living and true God everlasting — Of Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And I conceive this may be made appear by the following Arguments, (that is) by these three above the rest.

First, From the Words of God revealed in the Scriptures as concerning himself. *Secondly*, From the Creature, or the Reason and Nature of the Things made ; by which the eternal Power and Godhead are clearly seen, or may, in some sort, be understood, *Rom. i. 20.* And *Thirdly*, From that universal Consent, consequent thereto, which doth as fully confirm this Proposition, that there is a God, as any other Fact can justly pretend in that way to be confirmed by. As to the first Argument, I chuse rather to refer you to the Words spoken off God, (and revealed in the Scripture as spoken by God) as concerning himself ; not only because they have the greatest Weight in them, but for that likewise, it would be an endless Work for me to gather, and tedious to you to hear, all the Passages that the sacred Scriptures afford, to the same good Purpose. Thus, when God was sending *Moses* into *Egypt* to lead his People out of their Bondage, *Moses* asked of God, by what Name he would be called, to convince the *Israelites* of the Truth of his Mission : *God said unto Moses, I A M that I A M :* And he said, *Thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, I A M hath sent me unto you.* And
moreover,

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moreover, thou shalt say unto them, The Lord God S E R M.
of your Fathers hath sent me unto you (even *I E-* I.
HOVAH, the same with *I AM*); this is my 
Name for ever, [as it denotes the eternal, and necessary Existence of the Almighty] and this is
[my being the Lord God of Israel] my Memorial unto all Generations, *Exod. iii. 13, 14, 15.*

This most solemn Embassy God sent by the Word of his own Mouth, by *Moses* his Servant, who was the first who spake unto Men in the Name of the Lord. And so again, when God proclaimed that moral and eternal Law upon Mount Sinai. *Exod. 20. He spake saying, I am the Lord thy God*; and so on, Verses 1, 2. where *Jehovah, Elohim*, are joined together; (as frequently in many other places) the one to denote the Majesty and Glory of the eternal Godhead; the other to assure his People, of his Care and watchful Providence over them, if they lived in Obedience to his Commands. In short, he is God alone, or who will admit of no Rival. See, saith God, *that I, even I, am He, and there is no God with me, Deut. xxxii. 39.* And that from Everlasting to Everlasting he is God: A God, who is the same, without Shadow of changing, Yesterday, to day, and for ever. And this the following Texts sufficiently make out, *viz. Psal. xc. 2. Isaiah xli. 4, and cap. xlviii. 12.* In a word, *He only is, was, and is to come, God blessed for evermore*: Which may suffice to have said, in proof of this Proposition, that there is a God, from the express Words of God himself, in Testimony thereof, left recorded in the sacred Scriptures. I now come

S E R M. *Secondly*, Further to demonstrate that there is

I. a God, from the Creature, or the Nature of the Things made, which carry with them so sensible a Testimony of the Existence of a God, the supreme Creator, as will convince the Intellectual Faculty of the Mind, in such at least, who can, or who, without Prejudice, will give themselves time to think, or consider. For

1st, If we view the Works of Creation in the Lump; if we consider, either the Beauty of the Universe, as far as in our present State we can go, or else its vast Expansion or Extent; if we farther consider, that exact Order, and agreeable Harmony, in which, according to the Laws of Nature, the several Parts of the visible World do act, in order to the Preservation of the whole Machine, under the Direction of Providence, and that ever since they were originally made, in Number, in Weight, and Measure: I say, if we seriously think, and reflect on these things, and if withal we are satisfied, that none of the Creatures could make themselves, because nothing could act, before it exists; it follows, that albeit the Knowledge of all this is so wonderful, that we cannot attain unto it; yet, that God is nigh, even his Works of Wonder do declare. Again,

2^{dly}, If, amidst the unspeakable Variety of Things in particular, whether animate or inanimate, we look about us, and view them as thoroughly as we can; our Wonder and Surprise will increase in proportion to the Progress we make therein, or are capable of making. For instance, if we look at the Sun, (though after we have first watched him veiled under a Cloud) and observe, how like a Bridegroom he [daily] cometh out of his Chamber, and rejoiceth as a Gyant to run

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run his Course; and if we consider the Moon and the Stars also, which do constantly roul over our Heads, we cannot but own, with the devout Psalmist, (*Psalms*. xix. 1, 2.) *That the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy-work. That day unto day uttereth Speech, and night unto night sheweth Knowledge.* Especially considering;

3dly, The Vastness, the different Aspects, Influences, and the various Motions and Configurations of the heavenly Bodies among themselves, or in which they do stand one to another; I say, if this be duly considered; and how, by an uniform and steady Succession of Days, Months, and Years, it cometh to pass, that there is a Season to every thing, and a Time to every purpose under Heaven, it must be confessed, that God has made every thing beautiful in its time. And so again,

4thly, If we look at the more immediate Objects of our Senses; here, such a Scene openeth on every side around us, as cannot but strike us with Wonder and Admiration. The Light, and the common Air (which are every one's Propriety, but no Man's Inclosure) are pleasant, *Eccles.* xi. 7. In short, the unsearchable Ways of Production of living Creatures, and of Vegetables, [of Trees, of Herbs, and of Plants] out of their respective seminal Principles, are almost as mysterious, as their Creation at first out of nothing. Once more,

5thly, Wonderful it likewise is, to observe, how the Clouds from above do drop down Fatness upon the Earth, and by watering thereof do impregnate (as it were) the Earth below: which thereupon, as a teeming Mother brings forth Food

S E R M. der for the Cattle, and Herb (for Food or for
 I. Phyfick) for the Ufe of Man ; or how ſhe is
 enriched within, with Metals, and with Minerals ; ſo that we muſt confeſs, that the Earth is replenished with the Riches of divine Bounty. And ſo is the great and wide Sea alſo, wherein are creeping things innumerable, both ſmall and great. And beſide, its concealed Riches, and its ebbing and flowing, periodically, and for the moſt part regularly ; and the Check and Reſtraint of its proud Waves, ſo as not to turn again, and cover the Earth ; all this plainly ſhews, *that God's Way is in the Sea, and his Paths in the great Waters, and how his Footſteps are not known,* Pſal. lxxvii. 19.

6thly, Finally then, and to bring this particular to a Concluſion, (for this Subject is ſo copious, as ſcarce to have any bounds, or it is, at leaſt, as extenſive as univerſal created Nature herſelf is ;) if we view the Microcoſm, or the World in Little, (*i. e.*) turn our Eyes homeward, and inward upon our ſelves ; though the Eye of the Mind, like the Eye of the Body, can ſee almoſt every thing beſide itſelf ; yet the Soul of Man is not ſo ſhort-ſighted, in our preſent laſed State, but it can contemplate its own Operations, in ſome meaſure, and by virtue of the Powers of Perception, and Reflection, of Composition, Di- viſion, and Argumentation, ſo as to diſcover, that Man in his Origin was made little lower than the Angels of Light ; and far above the Beaſts which periſh ; as being his Off-ſpring who made us, and diſtinguiſhed us from all other ſublunary Creatures, by enduing us with that ſpark of divine Light, (as an Heathen could call) the reaſonable Soul. And ſo again, as to
 the

the Body, or outward Cabinet of the Soul for a S E R M. time (till Death breaks that Union;) I say, of I. so beautiful a Figure and Contexture is the whole Body under a single Appearance, and of so admirable a Symmetry and Proportion, is each part to other, or in relation to the whole earthly Tabernacle; that a Man of Understanding must confess with holy David, *That he is fearfully and wonderfully made, and curiously wrought in the lowest part of the Earth, [or in the Womb,] Psalm cxxxix. 14, 15.* And consequently, that the Works of the Lord are great, worthy to be praised and esteemed, and so done, as that they ought to be had in remembrance, Psalm cxi. 2, 3, 4. So certain and true is it, that the invisible Things of God, even his eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly seen by the Things made, or in the Glass of the Creatures, Rom. i. 20. And that God is, or there is a God, yet further appears, from,

Thirdly, The Consent of Mankind consequent to, or grounded on the Reason, and the Nature of Things (as before.) As there never was any thing, which, upon a more general Tradition, or with so universal a Consent was received, assented unto, or believed, as the Being of a God, hath been acknowledged by all Nations, even from the Beginning until now. The Writings of the more learned and polite Heathens, such as Plato, Socrates, Tully, and Seneca, afford abundant Testimonies to confirm the Existence of a God over all; yea, *there is neither Speech nor Language, but their Voices are [to the same purpose] heard among them. So that their Sound is gone out into all Lands, and their Words into the Ends of the Earth. For vox diversa sonat, Populorum est vox tamen una:* As the Poet speaks, in another

S E R M. another Sense, yet applicable to what I am now

I. upon. For, even *Parthians*, *Medes*, and *Elamites*,
 and so on, from the Floods to the World's End, they do, *uno ore*, with one Consent, proclaim the Glory of a supreme, self-existent Being, called G O D. Nay, even the superstitious and idolatrous Worship of many false gods, is what naturally will presuppose the Being of the one true God, antecedently to the others which are no gods. In short, in good Authors of the Gentile-Denomination, mention is made of not above two or three Atheists in about four thousand Years space. And the Sect of *Epicurus* was not very numerous, nor of any long Continuance in the World. And though most Ages and Countries have afforded too many practical Infidels, (as we see not a few such in the present Age) yet scarce any are to be heard of, who are *ex professo*, or really such; and were it otherwise, as one *Vaninius* was burnt at *Geneva* about two hundred Years ago as a professed Atheist; and as two others in the last Age [*Spinoza* and *Hobbs*] were little (if any thing) better, in Principle, than he whom I first mentioned, yet out of the Bulk of Mankind a small Number will avail no better to overthrow an universal Consent to the contrary, than the rare Appearance of now and then a Monster will countervail against universal human Nature. Which Observation leads me on to shew,

Secondly, That, as a necessary Consequence of what hath been hitherto, at large, insisted on Infidelity, or speculative Atheism, is, in the Reason of the Thing, utterly inexcusable; so that those, who refuse to yield assent unto sensible Con-

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II

Conviction, are left without Excuse. And as this S E R M. I. is the Result of the foregoing Reasoning; so, I am mistaken, if enough has not already been said, to make good the Conclusion; that they who can see, or, cannot but perceive, from Scripture, from sound Reason, and Experience also, unless they give the Lie to their own Conscience, and wink hard against all Conviction, are for so doing self-condemned; and being so, how can they expect to be acquitted at the great Tribunal of Heaven? Seeing, according to a noted Saying of St. Cyprian, *Hæc summa est delicti nolle agnoscere quem ignorare non possis.* This is a Crime, or Offence, of the first Magnitude, [or highest Degree] to refuse to acknowledge him, [to be the only true God] of whom he can in no wise be ignorant. It remains that

Thirdly and Lastly, I close all up with some few words of serious Exhortation to stir you up, one and all, to believe in God; so, as to fear him, to worship, serve, and obey him; as considering, that he is a Rewarder of them who diligently seek him; and not only so, but a God also, who punishes the wrong Doers, or all who go on in their wilful Sins without Repentance, hating to be reformed. A God he is, to whom Vengeance and Recompence belong; and therefore he ought to be feared. And for as much as the want of that Fear, which is the Beginning of Wisdom, is the Ground of all Immorality, Prophaneness, and practical Atheism; so no wonder is it, if an unholy, bad Life, carries such Miscreants further, even to deny the Lord who made them. To prevent any of you from being staggered through Unbelief, first, set the Lord always

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S E R M. ways before you; and then, secondly, entertain
 I, no Notion of God in your Minds, but what is
 most worthy of him, in whom you do live,
 move, and have your Being. Thirdly, read the
 Scriptures, and search them carefully; Meditate
 also on them Day and Night; These sacred Books
 afford the best Amulet against the spreading of
 the noisom Air of Infidelity and Scepticism, that
 like the Pestilence, destroyeth not a few at the
 Noon-day. Next, fourthly, avoid the Society
 (as much as you can) of such Fools, who not
 only make a Mock at Sin, but even at God also.
 And fifthly, pray against their Wickedness, and
 learn none of their ways; Sixthly, beware, lest
 being led away by their Error, ye fall from your
 own Sedfastness in the Faith. And lastly, look
 up unto the Lord who made all things for him-
 self. His is the Greatness, and the Power, and
 the Glory, and the Majesty. And therefore, let
 us join in Confort with the blessed Spirits above,
 in singing Praises to the Lord God Omnipotent,
 Saying, *Allelujah, Amen. Blessing, and Glory, and
 Wisdom, and Thanksgiving, Honour, Power, and
 Might be unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N

SERMON II.

God is the Righteous Judge
of all the Earth.

HEBREWS XI. latter Part of the 6th Verse.

— *And that He is a Rewarder of them
who diligently seek Him.*

IN a late Discourse upon the former Part of the Verse, I told you, that the Apostle having given a Description of Faith in general, (Verses 1, 2.) did declare withal the Necessity of it, in Verse the 6th, (just before the Words now to be considered) telling us, *That without Faith it is impossible to please God, for as much as he who cometh unto God, must believe that He is:* The firm Belief of the Existence of a Deity, or that there is a supream Being over all, the Creator and Preserver of all things, being the fundamental Principle of all Religion, whether Natural or Revealed. And upon this Foundation the Apostle proceeds further to shew, more at large, through this Chapter, the great Prerogatives, the excellent Fruits, and the wonderful Effects of Faith in numerous Instances, in the Times of old; as appears from the historical Books of the

S E R M.
II.

S E R M. the Old Testament, where the several Facts re-

II. referred unto stand recorded. Now upon such evident Proof that God is, it would be a slender Encouragement to come unto him, or to believe in him, or to worship, serve, and obey, and wholly to devote our selves to be at his Disposal, who is *Lord over all, in whose Hand every Creature is, and who, therefore, is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light, which no Man* [before he comes to see as he is seen in Heaven] *can approach unto* ; (1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.) and withal, as being Judge of all the Earth, having Power to save, and to destroy ; I say then, were it not so, that this God in whom we are bound to believe, has it as well in his Will as in his Power, to reward his faithful Servants, and to punish all the wilful and obstinate Transgressors of his righteous Laws ; it would be but slender Encouragement to come to God, or diligently to seek him, were he not a God who so judgeth in the Earth, as both to reward the Righteous, and to punish all the Unbelievers, and the Workers of Iniquity, who in defiance of his Laws, go perversely on in their Sins, and hate to be reformed, repent, or amend. Supposing then, or rather admitting, that there is a God over all, the first Cause, and the last End, of all things ; and that he is a Being of an abundant Mercy, and of a strict Justice also, in all his Dealings with the Sons of Men ; it is necessary for all who believe in God, at the same time to believe also, that he is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek, (*i. e.*) serve, honour, and obey him with a ready Heart, and with a willing Mind ; and not only so, but a God also,
to

to whom Vengeance and Recompence do belong, S E R M
as to all who hate him, and refuse to walk in his II.
ways. And all this is what, I conceive, the
Words now before us, in express Terms, or by
way of Implication, or necessary Consequence
do import. And this also is what every one,
who cometh unto God, must believe, as another
Article of the Christian Creed. And thus, ha-
ving opened the Words, I come more particu-
larly to confirm this Point, by endeavouring, as
plainly as I can, to demonstrate,

First, That all Laws, whether of God, or of
Man, to render them effectual to answer the
Ends for which thy are ordained, (especi-
ally in things necessary to Salvation) are
enforced by such Sanctions, (*i. e.*) Rewards
upon Obedience, or Punishments upon Con-
tempt, or wilful Neglect, as in Mercy, or
in Justice, are the Consequences of the one,
or of the other. This is so evident a Truth,
as requires no tedious or elaborate Proof.
Therefore in the

Second place, I shall confirm it, in relation to
the Laws of God in particular, by which
we must at last expect either to stand or to
fall in the Day of Judgment, from the sa-
cred Scriptures ; (*i. e.*) that God will then
render to every Man according to his
Works, whether they are good, or whether
bad. To which I shall add,

Thirdly and Lastly, An earnest Exhortation, in
the close of all, so to speak, and so to do,
as



as they, who shall be judged by *the Law of Liberty*, Jam. ii. 22. I am

First, In a more general way to shew you, that all Laws, whether of God or of Man, to render them effectual to answer the Ends for which they are ordained, (especially in things necessary to Salvation) are enforced by such Sanctions, (that is) Rewards upon Obedience, or Punishments upon Contempt, or wilful Neglect, as in Mercy, or in Justice, are the Consequences of the one, or of the other. The more general Purport and Intent of Laws, of whatever kind they are, is by proper Means, or by suitable Sanctions, to induce such, whom they are intended to oblige, to yield a ready and willing Obedience to such Laws as are made by a legal and competent Authority, for the Benefit and good Order of the governed Society. Some of the Heathen Moralists indeed have affirmed, as that Virtue is its own Reward, or a Reward of itself; so, consequently, on the other hand, that a disorderly and a vicious Course of Life, is usually attended with torment and misery enough. But alas! were this all, that either good Men were to expect, or that bad Men had to fear, it would afford but a poor Encouragement; a meager Reward as to the former, and an ineffectual Restraint, or Check upon the latter, in order to stop him in his career, and much less then to reform, or bring him to himself. But to set this matter in a due Light: If every reasonable Being must, in all good Reason, be endued with a Liberty of Choice, or of a Will to chuse, as well as with an Understanding to deliberate, to reason, and withal to direct the Will,

Will, in chusing the good, and in refusing that S E R M.
 which is hurtful, bad, and disagreeable; and if II.
 such Liberty be consistent with the Goodness, 
 Wisdom, and Justice of God, the supreme Law-
 giver, (as no doubt it is) it will from hence fol-
 low, that the Sanctions of God's Laws are neces-
 sary to induce an Obligation to Obedience to such
 Laws, by Rewards and Punishments, as the End
 of the first is to encourage a ready Compliance;
 and the Design of the latter, is to deter Men from
 Sin. And whereas, the Sanctions of God's Laws
 are like the Laws themselves, eternal and immu-
 table, because God is so; on the other hand,
 the Promises and Threats relating to the present
 Life, are, mostly, conditional, and therefore mu-
 table, as Circumstances may, and often do vary.
 This is plain from many places of Scripture, as
 particularly in the xviiith of Jerem. 7, 8. *At
 what time (saith God) I shall speak concerning a
 Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and
 to pull down, and to destroy it. If that Nation a-
 gainst whom I have proclaimed turn from their evil,
 I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them.*
 As on the contrary Part, if any fall away into
 bad Courses, how such will forfeit their Reward,
 you may see in the two following Verses of that
 Chapter. All which is largely confirmed by
 Ezekiel, Chap. xviii. and the 33^d Verse. So that
 (consistently with the Mercy, Goodness, and
 Justice of God) one may, from what has been
 said, in a general Way conclude with the Psalm-
 ist, and say, *Verily there is a Reward for the
 Righteous: Verily, he is a God that judgeth in the
 Earth,* Psal. lviii. 11. I now proceed in the

S E R M.

II.

Second place, To confirm what has been said of the Sanctions of all those Laws in general, or of the Necessity and Usefulness of Rewards and Punishments, (as before was said;) more especially with regard to the Laws of God, as according to Mens Obedience thereto, or their wilful Transgressions thereof, they must expect to stand or fall at the last Day; when God shall, by the Man Christ Jesus, judge the World in Righteousness, or so as to render to every Man [and Woman] according to their Doings, or Works, whether good, or whether bad, *Rom. xiv. 12.* And here, I shall first lay down this as a Scripture-ground to reason upon, in what follows; (*viz.*) That God, in relation to his Promises and Threats, is both merciful and gracious, faithful and just, in all his Doings with, and Dealings by, the Sons of Men; that his Ways are not (as) our Ways; that the Judge of all the Earth cannot but do right: Yea, though he hath said, *That he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth; yet still there is mercy with God, that he may be feared.* And let no Man presume to ask, *How these things can be?* For, *the secret things do belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us, Deut. xxix. 29.* Upon which Foundation, I come, secondly, further yet to confirm the Certainty of Rewards and Punishments, pursuant to the divine Laws, which stand upon Record in the Books of the Old and New Testament, which are given by Inspiration of God, who is *the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, 1 Tim. vi. 15.* Now that God will reward such who diligently seek him,

him, and faithfully serve him; and that he will punish all wrong Doers, and avenge him of all his Enemies, wicked and ungodly Sinners, who live in Disobedience to his Laws, and die without Repentance, no Christian (surely) can doubt this, who believes the Scriptures to be the Word of God. It is observable then, that the very first Law God gave to Man, or put him under, whilst in a State of Innocency, (which by the way, shews, how our first Parents were made able to stand, though at the same time, free to fall) I say, the first Law God gave to Man was a penal Law, for transgressing whereof, they, and we, and all their Posterity, became subject to Sin, and to Death, *Gen. ii. 16, 17.* The moral Law of God given to *Moses* on the Mount, *Exod. xx.* as to the second and third Commandments, was enforced by Reward and Threats; and the fifth was said by *St. Paul* to be the first Commandment (of the second Table, that is) with Promise. And after the giving that Law, in their Passage through the Wilderness towards the Land of Promise, the Almighty, to keep them steadfast in his Covenant, did not only encourage his People thereunto, by a great Variety of Blessings temporal, *Deut. xxviii.* from Verse the 3d, to Verse the 15th. And to strike them with Terrors of all kinds, (as very well adapted to the Genius of that People) God did also denounce heavy Judgments, or Curses against them, in case they would not hearken unto the Lord their God, to observe to do all his Commandments, and his Statutes: As you may see in the Chapter I last referred you to, from Verse the 16th to the 21st, and so onward. And, for the Reason I gave before, were the Promises and Threats

S E R M.

II.

God is the Righteous Judge

S E R M. under the legal Dispensation, for the most Part,
 H. of a temporal Nature, and after the Settlement
 of God's People in the Land of *Canaan*; till that
 People had so corrupted their ways before God,
 that he sent his Servants the Prophets to reclaim
 them, and then, another Scene began to open,
 by their Ministry, as to better Promises, in due
 time, to be made manifest by *Messias the King*:
who was to bring Life and Immortality [or im-
mortal Life] to Light through the Gospel. In the
 mean while, though *Israel* his People, whilst they
 lived in Obedience to God's Laws, and served
 God with a perfect [or an upright.] Heart, and
 with a willing Mind, were distinguished by many
 signal Marks of the Almighty's Favour and Pro-
 tection, from, and above, all other People under
 Heaven; yet when they rebelled against God, and
 served Idols, and became abominable in their
 ways, then the Wrath of God was poured out upon
 them; and so heavy were the Judgments which
 God inflicted on those who despised him, that he
 cursed their very Blessings, *Malachi ii. 2.* In a
 word, the Prophet *Daniel*, as to the Measure of
 Rewards and Punishments, or their being ever-
 lasting, or beyond the Confines of the present
 Life, is allowed to out-strip or exceed, not only
 all of his Order, but even of the other Pen-men
 of the Old Testament. When he said, Chap. xii.
 2. *That many, or all of them who sleep in the*
dust of the Earth, shall awake; some to everlasting
Life, and some to Shame, and everlasting Contempt.
 Lastly then, what I said even now is more am-
 ply displayed under the Gospel Dispensation, by
 Jesus Christ, the Angel of the new, and better,
 Covenant of Grace and Truth, and by his Evan-
 gelists, and holy Apostles, in the New Testa-
 ment,

ment, wherein the fore-mentioned most important Truths are set in a fuller and clearer Light, than before they were. Now the consequential, or more direct Proofs of the eternal Duration of the Joys of Heaven, and of the Torments of Hell, (in the other World) are many in the New Testament. But I shall at present content my self with some few only, which I conceive will make a direct, and a full Proof of the Eternity of Joy, or of endless Misery, in another State, after the present Life is done and ended. Thus our Saviour, to whom all Judgment is committed at the last Day, after having given an account of the Process of the Judgment of that Day, and distinguished betwixt the Sheep and the Goats (or the Righteous and the Wicked) *Mat. xxvi.* He declared, at Verse the 26th, *That the Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal*; being first separated, and then parted for ever, by the Sentences of *Come ye blessed, and go ye cursed, ver. 34, 41.* Again, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, (said Jesus) the Hour is coming, when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. Yea, all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice and shall come forth: they, who have done good, to the Resurrection of Life; and they, who have done evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation, John v. 25, 29.* From all which it is obvious to gather, first, that there certainly will be a Day of Judgment and Retribution, in which the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus, shall judge the World in Righteousness; and that secondly, *All (Mankind) must appear before his Judgment Seat: that every one may receive the things done in his (or her) body,*

God is the Righteous Judge

S E R M. dy, according to what he (or she) hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. v. 10. That third-

ly, God is not only a Rewarder of those who diligently seek him; but as to such who know him not, but are carnal, and given to Fraud and Injustice, the Lord will be the Avenger of all such, 1 Thess. iv. 5, 6. And now it only remains in the

Third and Last place, seeing these things are so, that I exhort you so to speak, and so to do, as they who shall (at last) be judged by the Law of Liberty, (i. e.) the Gospel, or Evangelical Law. Consider then, I beseech you, that a Day of Doom will assuredly come; but that as to the precise Time, nothing is more uncertain, for of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man, nor Angel, but the Father only. And therefore, let us, being at such Uncertainty of our Lord's Coming, do, as the five wise Virgins in the Parable did, who that they, at the midnight Cry, might be ready to go out, and to meet the Bridegroom, took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps, and at the Call, arose and trimmed their Lamps, and went in with the Bridegroom (as being ready) unto the Marriage, Matt. xxv. 10. To conclude, Watch therefore, (saith our Saviour) because you know not what Hour your Lord cometh. Be ye therefore ready, for in such an Hour as ye think not, he cometh; who then is a faithful Servant? Let him watch and pray, for blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh shall find so doing.

“ Now may Almighty God of his gracious
 “ Goodness be pleased, shortly to accom-
 “ plish

“ plish the Number of his Elect, and to S E R M.
 “ hasten his Kingdom; that we, with all II.
 “ who are departed in the true Faith of his
 “ holy Name, may have our perfect Con-
 “ summation and Bliss, both in Body and
 “ Soul, in his Eternal Glory, through Jesus
 “ Christ our Lord:” To whom, with the
 Father, and the Holy Ghost, &c.

CHRON. XIX. II.

Thine, O Lord, is the Glory, and the
 Honour, and the Majesty, for all time in the Hea-
 ven, and in the Earth, is Thine; Thine is
 the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art
 the Head of all.

THESE Words are a Part of King
 David's Supplication, and Thanksgiving
 to Almighty God, when that pious
 Prince had, as well by his own personal Labours,
 as by his perceptive Reasoning, engaged
 the chief of the Fathers and Heads of the Tribes
 of Israel, and the military Officers of his King-
 dom, very largely to contribute towards the build-
 ing of a Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem; and
 now upon this solemn Occasion, King Da-
 vid, in God's special Command, Chap. xxviii.
 (verse 2.) by his Son and Successor King
 David's Supplication, and Thanksgiving
 to Almighty God, when that pious
 Prince had, as well by his own personal Labours,
 as by his perceptive Reasoning, engaged
 the chief of the Fathers and Heads of the Tribes
 of Israel, and the military Officers of his King-
 dom, very largely to contribute towards the build-
 ing of a Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem; and
 now upon this solemn Occasion, King Da-
 vid, in God's special Command, Chap. xxviii.
 (verse 2.) by his Son and Successor King

S E R M.
 III.

4th SERMON

SERMON III.

Of a General Providence, over all Creatures.

I CHRON. XXIX. 11.

Thine, O Lord, is the Greatness, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majesty: for all that is in the Heaven, and in the Earth, is Thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all.

SERM.
III.

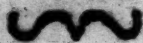
THESE Words are a Part of King David's Supplication, and Thanksgiving to Almighty God, when that pious Prince had, as well by his own bountiful Liberality, as by his perswasive Reasoning, engaged the chief of the Fathers and Heads of the Tribes of *Israel*, and the military Officers of his Kingdom, very largely to contribute towards the building of a Temple of the Lord at *Jerusalem*; and and that (after David's Time, who having been a Man of Blood) by his Son and Successor King *Solemon*, by God's special Command, Chap. xxviii, 6. Now upon this solemn Occasion, King David, with the People, did not only rejoice with great

great Joy; but he likewise blessed (or praised) SERM.
the Lord before all the Congregation; and that, III
in the highest Flights of an inspired, and very W
devout, Eloquence, from Verse the 10th to Verse
the 19th. From all which most sublime Charac-
ters, and appropriate Attributes of the Lord God
Almighty, Omniscient, and every where present,
as here enumerated in my Text, it will, (I hope)
be made appear to the Evidence of a Demonstra-
tion, that the Lord our Maker and Preserver, is
so far from being an indolent, unactive Being, (as
Epicurus foolishly imagined) that the manifest
Footsteps of God's Providence are visible in all
Places, and over all the Creatures; even to the
taking Care of Oxen, of the young Ravens, and the
filling all things living with his inexhaustible Boun-
ty; and I conceive, the Words now before us
will make out (as they fully assert) the Truth
of a general Providence: Which is what, in dis-
coursing on them, I shall do my Endeavour to
illustrate, and to confirm also. And in order to
my making Proof of what in general I even now
said, I shall in my following Discourse, proceed
in this Method or Order, (*i. e.*)

First, I shall endeavour to demonstrate, both
from Scripture and sound Reason also,
that ever since God made the World by his
Almighty Power, He has been pleased so
to govern, sustain, and support the Frame
of universal Nature; and so to order, guide,
and direct all Things and Events therein,
as may best set forth His own Glory, and
conduce to the Preservation of the whole
World, and of all its constituent Parts; till
it shall please Him to dissolve their Unity,
when

SERM.

III.



when the End of all Things shall come: I shall attempt to shew,

Secondly, How very absurd, and void of Reason, the Hypothesis of the *Epicurean* Infidels, both antient and modern, is, who assert, that as all Things (according to them) were first made, and set together by meer Chance, no body could ever tell, either *how*, or *when*: So, they continue (say they) to act by a blind Fate, or Necessity, without any impulsive Cause, or without being directed to any determinate End. To which I shall add,

Thirdly, Some few Inferences from the premised Discourse; and then shall close all up;

Lastly, With some such Reflections, concerning a general Providence over all, as may be a Confirmation of the Argument I now am to maintain. But

First, I am to shew you upon what Grounds the Belief of a general Providence over all, is built, or established. And here I observe, that granting there is a God, [a most powerful, intelligent, and self-existent Being] who first made, and ever since presides over all Things; the Belief of a watchful Providence over the universal World, cannot, with any Colour of Reason, be denied. Because this God is omniscient, and every where present; and consequently, not only perfectly understands the Nature of all the Works which Himself hath made; but also views, and sees through the whole Chain of Causes; and sets eve-

ry

ry Wheel in Motion also; not only so, but guides S E R M.
 and directs every such Motion also, to its ap- III.
 pointed End. Having premised this, in general, to make way for two special Arguments, whereby I am to prove a general Providence, both from Scripture, and by sound Reason also. As to Scripture, in the first Place; certainly no Man who believeth the divine Authority of the sacred Books, or that they were given by Inspiration of God, can be long to seek for (if he searcheth the Scriptures) such full Evidence of a general Providence over all, which not only supports all Things in Being; but which, to answer those Ends, makes a liberal Provision also, for every living Creature; even to not letting a Sparrow fall to the Ground without his Cognizance. So that there is not the least Thing in the World, to which the Providence of God doth not extend it self. *Mat. vi. 26. 30.* Besides, we do not only, *live, and move in Him who gave us our Being; but he giveth us all things richly to enjoy:* and likewise so ordereth and disposeth all Events, as to make every thing to work together for Good to them who love Him, to them who are the Called according to His Purpose. *Rom. viii. 28.* Though the Books of both the Old and New Testament do abound with numerous Proofs of the Being of a general Providence, yet to avoid being over tedious, I range some of the more plain and obvious Texts in Proof thereof, under these three following Heads. (*viz.*) *First*, That God being the sovereign Lord over all His Creatures, is armed with supream Authority, as being the high, and lofty one, who inhabiteth Eternity, and consequently, the only Potentate, at whose Disposal every thing is. *Secondly*, that
 God's

Of a General Providence,

SERMON. God's infinite Wisdom and Goodness do incline Him to take the Government of the Universe into his own Hands, as being Himself only equal unto it. And *Thirdly*, That boundless Power of the Almighty enables Him (if I may so speak) to execute his universal Dominion over all, according to his own Will and Purpose. For, *Great is the Lord, and worthy to be praised, yea, his Power is infinite.* But *First*, As to the supream Authority of God over all his Creatures; or that this his everlasting Dominion over all, will speak a general Providence, I conceive the following Texts do afford an evident Proof. Thus *Melchisedec* said, *Blessed be Abram of the most high God; Possessor of Heaven and Earth.* And how full and express the Words of my Text are to the afore-said Intent, has already been shewn. *The Lord is King for ever and ever, Psalm x. 16.* Again, *I know, that the Lord is Great, and above all Gods, and that whatsoever the Lord pleased, that He did, in Heaven, and in the Earth, in the Seas, and all deep Places, Psalm cxxxv. 5, 6.* Yea, *It is he who appointed the Ordinances of Heaven and Earth, Jerem. xxxiii. 35.* Thus *Nebuchadnezzar*, when he was restored from a brutal to a reasonable Nature, *Blessed the most High, who liveth for ever and ever, whose Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, and who doeth according to his Will, and none can stay his Hand, or say unto him, what doest Thou? Dan. iv. 34, 35.* Once more, The inspired Penmen of the new Testament assert the same; for Instance, *All things were created by Him, and for Him, and He is before all Things, and by Him all Things consist, that in all Things he might have the Pre-eminence. Col. i. 16, 17, 18.* But to proceed, *Secondly*, The Almighty Wisdom and Goodness

Goodness do likewise speak Him to be equal to SERM.
 take the Government of the Universe into his III.
 own Hands. And this, (I doubt not) the follow-
 ing Texts (if rightly understood and duly apply-
 ed) will sufficiently make appear. Thus Solomon
 observes, *that though there are many Devices in*
Man's Heart, yet the Counsel of the Lord, that shall
stand, Prov. xix. 21. God's Wisdom knows no
Bounds; His Eyes are in every Place beholding the
Evil, and the Good; and all Things are naked and
opened before him: His Goodness also, like himself,
is infinite. He is good, and therefore he doeth Good,
Psal. cxix. 68. O! the Depth then both of the Wis-
dom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his
Judgments; and his Ways past finding out! For of
Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all Things;
to whom be Glory for ever. Amen, Rom xi. 33,
36. Again, Lastly, God's Almighty and bound-
less Power (in Conjunction with his other above-
mentioned Attributes) is what enables him to ex-
ecute his universal Sway and Dominion according
to his own Will and Purpose. Thus the Lord is
King, and the Earth may (well) be glad thereof.
Yea, Let all Those who seek Thee, O Lord! be glad
in Thee: Let them who love thy Salvation, say con-
tinually, The Lord be magnified, Isaiah xl. 16. For
He is the great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts
is his Name: great in Council, and mighty in Works
(and whose Eyes are open upon all the ways of the
Sons of Men) to give to every one according to his
Ways, and the Fruit of his Doings, Jerem. xxxii.
18, 19. In a Word, by this boundless Power of
the Almighty it cometh, that all Things [without
any sensible Alteration or Decay] continue as they
were, from the Beginning of the Creation. And
that as to the Sons of Men in particular; He alone is
the

S E R M. *the God of the Spirits of all Flesh: that he holdeth*

III. *our Soul in Life, Psalm lxvi. 9. And through Him*

it is, that [on many Occasions] we do escape Death: as every one's Experience testifies. And thus having (as I hope) abundantly from the Scriptures made it appear, that there is a general Providence presiding over, governing, over-ruling, and directing, all God's Works to their appointed End, it remains that

Secondly, I appeal in few Words, unto all the Reason of Mankind, upon the before mentioned Considerations both of the Nature and Attributes of God. But here, I conceive, much need not be said, it being observable

1. That the Belief of a Providence (general or special) is a necessary Consequence of the Belief of the Being of a God: The former being credible, and as clear, and full an Evidence, as the latter. And therefore

2. It is farther observable, that none ever called the general over-ruling Providence of the Almighty in Question, but such prophane Miscreants, *in all whose Thoughts God is not*; and for whom it would be well, if there were no God to avenge himself on them, as well for their Infidelity, as for their evil Lives, (unless repented of, and reformed *before they go hence no more to be seen.*)

Once more, and to conclude this Particular. Certainly nothing can be more absurd and contradictory to Reason, than the foolish Supposition of some of our modern Free-thinkers now a-days; who pretend, That God (to avoid Trouble) is wholly indolent, and leaves every Thing to meer Necessity, and blind Chance. For according to the Judgment of the judicious and learned

Grotius,

Grotius, who somewhere speaks to this Purpose S E R M.
of God's over-ruling general Providence. "That III.
" God, knowing all Things, and being every 
" where present also, can with infinitely more
" Ease [speaking after the Manner of Men] look
" over, guide, rule, and direct, all the Affairs
" of his universal Family of the Creatures, in
" Heaven, and in Earth, in the Seas, and in all
" deep Places; than it is possible for the wisest,
" and most knowing and prudent Man that ever
" lived, to rule or govern, or to direct, in his
" Family, though never so small in Number."
But,

Thirdly, I am to make some Inferences from
what has been discoursed on the foregoing Sub-
ject. And

I. Doth it appear from the Arguments which
I have made use of, that there is an all-wise Pro-
vidence presiding, ruling over, directing, and
ordering the Affairs of the whole World? I say,
Is this so? From hence we ought to learn, not
only as firmly to believe there is a Providence, as
we do believe there is a God over all, (and that
upon the same Grounds of Evidence) but to sub-
mit also unto the Government and Appointments
of Providence, because God hath not left himself
without Witness, (no, nor Infidels with any Co-
lour of Excuse) in that *He doeth Good, and send-
eth Rain in its Season, and giveth fruitful both Sea-
sons, and Increase; filling Men's Hearts with Food
and Gladness,* Acts xiv. 17. Again,

II. This universal Bounty of Providence, so
visible every where, and extending to every Crea-
ture, is what in all good Reason ought to excite
our

S E R M. our Gratitude, and make us to praise him with
 III. thankful Hearts, and with joyful Lips.

III. *Do the Eyes of the Lord run through the Earth, bebolding the Evil and the Good? and are they over all the Ways of Men? Is nothing hid from him, in whose Sight all Things are opened and naked?* This Consideration ought to reconcile us willingly to submit unto the Dispensations of Providence, and patiently to undergo any such Afflictions, or Distresses, as he thinks fit to put us under, or to inflict on us in this life; either for the Tryal of our Faith, or Patience, or for the Punishment of our Sins, thereby to bring us nearer to Himself: Seeing none can harm us, if we be Followers of that which is good. For, *God is a Sun, and a Shield, [a Light and a Defence] to all who walk uprightly before him; and no good Thing withholdeth he from the upright in Heart, but will give them Grace and Glory,* Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

Lastly, From what has been said, one may farther discover, upon what express Conditions we may reasonably expect to be taken under the Protection of God's good Providence; viz. *If we trust in his Goodness, patiently wait for him, and cast our Care upon him (who careth for us) whose Compassion faileth not, and whose Mercies are over all his Works.* It now only remains, that I proceed

Lastly, To close all up with some Reflections suitable to, and in Confirmation of, the very important Subject which I have treated of.

I. Consider how for near Six Thousand Years since the Creation to this Day, all Things do continue as they were from the Beginning: but how it is possible they should do so, without the Support of a Providence, is as unaccountable, as
 how

how all Things could come into Being, without **S E R M.**
an Almighty and All-wise Creator. Again, **III.**

II. Consider that God, even the Lord *Jehovah*,
sitteth in the Heavens, as King of Kings, and Lord
of Lords: He pulleth down one, and setteth up ano-
ther: In his Hand, and at his Disposal, are all
Things, as by Him all Things subsist, and there-
fore do depend on him, as their First Cause.

III. Consider, that upon Account of God's so-
vereign Authority over all, and of his Almighty
Power, that our whole Dependance is upon his
Bounty: it follows, that the greatest Princes, as
well as Men of low Degree, may truly affirm,
That God's Providence is their Inheritance. And
therefore, saith God by his Prophet *Jerem.*
chap. ix. 23. Let not the wise Man glory in his
Wisdom; neither the mighty Man glory in his Might:
Let not the rich Man glory in his Riches: But let
him who glorieth, glory in this, That he understandeth
and knoweth Me, that I am Jehovah, who exercise
Loving-kindness, Judgment, and Righteousness in
the Earth: for in these Things I delight, saith the
Lord. I conclude with a good Prayer of our
Church.

O God! whose never failing Providence ordereth
all Things, both in Heaven and Earth, we hum-
bly beseech Thee, to put away from us all hurt-
ful Things, and to give us such Things as be
profitable for Us, through *Jesus Christ our*
Lord. To whom, with &c.

SERMON IV.

Of God's Special Providence, watch-
fully Superintending over every
Creature in particular in the whole
World.

MATTHEW X. 29, 30.

*Are not two Sparrows sold for a Farthing?
and one of them shall not fall on the Ground
without your Father. But the very Hairs
of your Head are all numbered.*

SERM.
IV.

I Lately attempted to prove both the Existence
of a God, and, in Consequence thereof, to
demonstrate also, that there is a general Pro-
vidence, watchfully superintendent over, and ad-
ministring in, the Affairs of the Almighty's uni-
versal Family, all the World over. Now what
I am next, in Order, to undertake, is, to con-
sider the special, or particular Providence of God,
which manifestly displays it self, in his govern-
ing, conserving, and making a sufficient Provi-
sion, for every living Creature; and in his or-
dering and directing all Events (even to the
disposing of *the Lot cast in the Lap*, Prov. xvi. 33.)
even the most contingent ones; so as to make
them

them best promote his own Glory, and the Benefit of His Creatures also. And for the better making good of a particular Providence (as before) I have made Choice of the Words of our Saviour now before us. *Are not two Sparrows sold for a Farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the Ground without your Father. But the very Hairs of your Head are all numbered.* Which Words were brought in by our Lord, upon the following Occasion. Being about to send the Twelve Apostles to preach the Gospel only to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel; He informed them before-hand, what hard usage they were to expect from that People. *Behold, (said he) I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves,* verse 16. And cautioning them to beware even of their near Relations, who should betray them to the Rage of the then ruling Powers, he foretold *that they should be hated of all Men, and persecuted also from City to City, for his Name's Sake.* And albeit this was but cold Encouragement, yet he charged them *not to fear those who kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul,* verse 28. And farther intimated this as a cogent Reason to enforce such his Command (*viz.*) because they were under the special Care of God's Providence, which extends to the feeding and preserving the very Fowls of the Air, and the Hairs of their Head. So that they had all the Reason in the World to think, that in God's Esteem, they were more worth than many Sparrows; yea, than their whole Species. But having shewn how our Saviour first introduced, and then apply'd the Words before us; I shall first lay down a general Ground, or Position to proceed on; and then, shall descend to some particular Proofs of the said general Doctrine. Now

S E R M. the Position is this: That if the Providence of

IV. God takes Care of even such Fowls of the Air as the Sparrows and Ravens (which are rather mischievous than useful) how much more then will God regard Mankind, made in his own Image? And if the Hairs of a Man's Head are not overlooked by his Providence, surely then, much less will the Head they issue from, be so. Which Way of Reasoning from the less to the greater, affords us a good Argument for a particular Providence, which extends itself unto each individual Creature; "so that there is not the least Thing in the universal World but what shares in the Benefit of God's governing Providence over all." This is what

First, I shall endeavour to make good by shewing, 1st, That in Fact it is so; and then by enquiring 2^{dly}, Why it is so?

Secondly, I shall make an Inference or two, and then,

Lastly, I shall conclude with some practical Improvement which this Subject may direct us to. But

First, That there is a particular Providence which governs over each individual Person, and whose Eye is over the most minute Things in Nature, and who ordereth the most casual Events to some determinate End; I shall attempt to shew this as briefly as I can, and that in a demonstrative Way; Thus: 1st, That so it is, as I before asserted, or that there is a particular Providence, in whose Eye every Creature, or Thing,

is naked or opened. And 2dly, I shall shew, S E R M.
 Why it is so, or how it cannot otherwise be. As to IV.
 the first, That there is a special or particular Pro-
 vidence, the Exercise of which extends to indivi-
 dual Persons, and to the minutest Things (as ap-
 pears from my Text) and consists in the Govern-
 ment of all Events also, is what, I conceive, may
 be made appear from the following Arguments;
 (that is to say)

1st, As the Ground of all, from the Nature
 and Attributes of God, the supream Governour of
 the World, and of every Thing therein, as being
 the Works of his Almighty Hand, and therefore
 the Care of his watchful Providence also; to in-
 spect, order, and direct them, one and all, to
 their appointed Ends, and respective Uses, for
 which they were first intended. To which Pur-
 pose God is self-sufficient, as being self-existent in
 himself, and infinitely wise, powerful, and good:
 and withal omniscient, and omnipresent, or com-
 mensurate to all Space, and consequently his Eyes
 are in every Place, beholding the evil and the
 good. I say the Eyes of the Lord, being in eve-
 ry Place, do, at one intuitive View, see all Things
 as in themselves they are; and his Knowledge
 comprehends all, and his Ways are past finding
 out. This is, beyond all Doubt, the principal
 Argument for a particular Providence in the ex-
 tensive Latitude before mentioned. Again, ano-
 ther Argument we have,

2dly, Like unto the former, as flowing from
 the same Fountain of Knowledge; I mean, that
 taken from the sacred Scriptures which were given
 by Inspiration of God, *Holy Men* (of old) *speaking by them, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,*
 1 Pet. i. 21. Now in these lively Oracles of Di-

S E R M. vine Truth, we meet with *line upon line*, in Confirmation of what I am now making out. But
 IV.  having already brought forth not a few Testimonies from the Scriptures whereby to prove a general Providence, I think it may suffice at present, only to add a few more upon this Occasion. Now that he who made all Things, should govern, support, and take Care of, every Creature, is what is very evident in the sacred Scriptures. For, saith David, *O Lord, all that is in the Heavens, and in the Earth, is thine: Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all*, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. Yea, *The Lord is King for ever and ever*, Psalm x. 16. And whatsoever he pleaseth, he doeth, *He appointeth the Ordinances of Heaven and Earth*, Jerem. xxxiii. 25. So that we may say with Israel of old, *Bless the Lord God for ever and ever! Blessed be his glorious Name, who alone made the Heavens with all their Hosts; the Earth, and all things therein, and preserveth them all*, Nehem. ix. 5, 6. In a Word, all things were created by Him, and for Him, He is before all things, and by Him all things do consist. Who then can think, That such a God as our God, should neglect any of his Creatures? or be wanting to them, either in his Care, Protection, or making Provision for them? That on the contrary, God is most gracious and bountiful to all His Family, and in particular to the Sons of Men. I dare appeal

3dly, To all the Reason of Mankind, and to every Man's personal Experience also, for the Truth of it. And farther, to convince all Christians of, and to shew them on whom they must depend for a constant Supply of the Necessaries of Life, our Saviour has taught us to pray God, to
 give

give us Day by Day our daily Bread, Matt. vi. II. S. E. R. M. IV.

But this falling in with
II. The next Enquiry I am to make under my first general Head of Discourse; or why it is so? or how it cannot otherwise be? than as I proved before, that God's Providence extends to every living Creature, yea, to even casual Events, *Luke xii. 28.* And *Solomon* thus speaks, as before, *Proverbs xvi. 33. The Lot is cast into the Lap,* [meaning either that of a Garment, or into some hollow Vessel, and then drawing it out again] yet the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. Scripture and sound Reason then, do evidently confirm the Belief of a particular Providence, and shew withal, how very contradictory to the former, and how very absurd, as to the latter, it is, to suppose a God without a Providence, even as a solitary Being, retired within Himself: wholly unconcerned for any Thing beside Himself, and leaving all Things to conduct themselves by a blind Chance. An Absurdity this! which is near a-kin to that of the Fool, who having said in his Heart [or impiously thought] *there is no God*, imagined, that they made themselves; as if any thing had, or possibly could have, a Power to move, or to act, before it had any Being: which is a gross Contradiction, not only to Reason, but even to common Sense. For, let any one endued with the one, (yea even with the other) but consider how all natural Bodies do act, subordina- tely to each other, and yet do uniformly pursue their several Ends, and good Purposes, in Relation to the whole universal Frame, with an agreeable Harmony among themselves, without any Knowledge of one another, or conscious Contrivance of their own. It must hence follow, that

S E R M. only such a Being, as we conceive Almighty God
 IV. to be, could at first set this World together: and
 ~~~~~ that it absolutely requires a ruling, watchful Providence over all, not only to put the several Parts of this grand Machine into, but to continue them also, in Motion, by adapting them so unto one another, as to make them all concur to act, for the Good or Preservation of the whole. In short, God's wonderful Production of all living Creatures as well as of Men, in the way of a successive Generation, for almost Six Thousand Years, may well pass for a concluding Argument as to both the preceeding Heads of Discourse (or rather the two Particulars insisted upon under the first general Head) what I am next to do, is

*Secondly*, To make an Inference or two from what has been said. As

1<sup>st</sup>, If a Sparrow cannot fall on the Ground without the Permission, at least, of God's Providence; we Men, who by his Donation are subordinate Lords over all other sublunary Creatures, surely *are* (as our Saviour speaks just below my Text) *of more Value than many Sparrows*: And being so, I gather from what has been said, that we ought, not only not to repine at Providence, whatever befalls us in this Vale of Misery, because God knows best what is fittest for us: but we ought in our Patience rather to possess our Souls. Again,

2<sup>dly</sup>, Is every good Thing which we have, the Gift of God's Providence, freely bestowed on us? Let us learn from hence, (as in Duty and Gratitude bound) to bless, and praise God, as for all the Comforts and Conveniences of the present Life; so, more especially for the Means of Grace  
 and

*Of God's Special Providence, &c.* 41

and the Hope of Glory in the next, through Je-  
sus Christ our only Advocate with the Father,  
and the Propitiation for our Sins. And

*3dly and Lastly,* Such, who are convinced by  
Scripture, by Reason, and their own daily Expe-  
rience, of the Goodness of God unto them, in the  
Land of the living, cannot but see, both how  
reasonable it is to believe a particular (as well as  
a general) Providence; and to depend upon it:  
and how very foolish, and absurd a thing it is,  
for a Man, a Worm, or thing of Nought, to  
cavil at, or spurn against Providence; or, in Ef-  
fect, with the Fool to [think, or] say in his  
Heart, *there is no God*. But of this, more may  
be said hereafter, in its proper Place. Mean  
while, I come,

*Thirldly and Lastly,* To make in the Close of  
all, a brief Application to our selves, in Order  
to some practical Improvement, upon this whole  
Matter. Well then, considering that it is God  
who made us, and that in him we live and  
move, in whom we have our Being; we may ra-  
tionally conclude from hence, that God being  
merciful and of great Compassion, as well as self-  
sufficient, and omniscient, is alone able to extend  
his most liberal Bounty, to every living Crea-  
ture, or Member of his universal Family. Let us  
then fear before him, when at any time we fall  
under his Chastisements; and let us love, and  
adore him, for his loving-kindnesses (many and  
great) bestowed on us! Yea, Let us, in all E-  
vents, trust in, and depend upon, his watchful  
Providence over us. In short then, *In the Day  
of Prosperity rejoice; but in the Day of Adversity  
consider*: For the former, bless the Lord, and  
make



SERMON. make his Praise to be glorious! And as to the  
 IV. latter, consider how short your Punishment in  
 this Life, is of your Deserts! should God be ex-  
 treme to mark what is done amiss of the best of  
 Men: Finally, set God always before you, so  
 will ye be careful, never wilfully to offend him.  
 That we may all so do, let us conclude with a  
 good Prayer of our Church.

*O God, who never failest to help and govern them  
 whom Thou dost bring up in thy steadfast Fear  
 and Love; keep us, we beseech Thee, under the  
 Protection of thy good Providence; and make  
 us to have a perpetual Fear and Love of thy  
 holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost,  
 be given, all Glory and Honour, Laud and  
 Thanksgiving, now and for ever. Amen.*

SERMON

# S E R M O N V.

Of the Wisdom and Goodness of Providence, seen in His forming the evil Intentions of wicked Men to His own Glory.

---

G E N. XLV. the 7th, and Part of the 8th Verses.

*God sent me before you, to preserve you a Posterity in the Earth, and to save your Lives by a great Deliverance: So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God.*

**T**H E S E Words were uttered by *Joseph* S E R M. to his conscious or guilty Brethren, in V. the Land of *Egypt*, when their Hearts misgave them for the Injury they had done him, upon his making himself known unto them, when they came a second time thither for another Supply of Corn for their Father, and themselves, and their Families. Before I come to consider the Words of my Text, I think it requisite to put you in Mind, 1<sup>st</sup>, Of the hard and inhuman Treatment he met with from his vengeful Brethren; and the Occasion thereof, in a short historical Account, extracted from the 37th, 38th, 39th,



S E R M. 39th, and following Chapters of *Genesis*. And

V. then 2<sup>dly</sup>, I shall shew you the Meaning, and great Importance of the Words. As to the 1<sup>st</sup>, or the Occasion (unjustly taken by his Brethren) it was *Joseph's* Two Dreams which he dreamed, while yet in his native Land. The one, as concerning their Sheaves in the Field doing Obeisance to his Sheaf. The other Dream was of the Sun, of the Moon, and eleven Stars: Both which, being interpreted, gave *Joseph* the Pre-eminence over his Father *Jacob*, as well as over his Eleven Brethren, which made his Father rebuke him; and his Brethren, not only envy, but even hate him, and to plot Mischief against him. And he going into a solitary Place or Field, where his Brethren were; they laid hold on that Opportunity to avenge themselves on him; 1<sup>st</sup>, By casting him into a deep dry Pit, where he must have perished with Hunger and Thirst, had they not altered that wicked Purpose, at the Instance of *Judah*, and taken him up out of the Pit: Which having done, they forthwith sold him to some *Midianitish* Merchants, by Chance coming by at that instant, for Twenty Pieces of Silver, as a Slave; who sold him as such, in *Egypt*, to *Potiphar*, Captain of the Guard to *Pharaoh*, King of that Country. Thus far the Enmity and Rage of his Brethren pursued *Joseph*, as they, no doubt, imagined, to Bonds, and even to Death. But in all *Joseph's* Sufferings, it is evident that God was with him, and blessed his Master's House because of him. Yea, when through the Treachery and false Accusation of his lascivious Mistress, he was wrongfully imprisoned, and the Irons did enter into his Soul, when under that hard Durance; yet God, by enduing him with the Power of interpreting

preting the Dreams of two of *Pharaoh's* Servants, *S E R M.*  
 his Fellow-prisoners, *Joseph* was, by interpreting *V.*  
 another Dream of the King's also, as concerning  
 the seven fat, and seven lean Kine, not only re-  
 leased from his unjust Imprisonment, but proved  
 the Occasion of his speedy and high Advance-  
 ment in *Egypt*, and even to be the second Man  
 in that Kingdom; to the unspeakable Advantage  
 of the King, and of his People; and in Conse-  
 quence of such his high Advancement, he became  
 an Instrument under God of preserving his aged  
 Father a Posterity in the Earth, and of saving  
 their Lives by a great Deliverance. So that he  
 might well say, that it was not his Brethren's ma-  
 licious Wickedness, but God's gracious Goodness,  
 which sent him into *Egypt* before them, for the  
 aforesaid good Ends. *So then, it was not you*  
*(who intended nothing less) who sent me hither,*  
*but (that) God, who is able to bring Good out of*  
*the evil Purposes of wicked and malicious Men.*  
 Having put you in Mind of the History of *Jo-*  
*seph*, as far as my Text relates unto it. What I  
 have farther to premise, 2dly, as concerning the  
 aforesaid wonderful Case of *Joseph* (so indeed it  
 was in all its Turns) in the Land of *Egypt*, is, that  
 first, We therein have a very plain Instance of  
 a particular Providence; not only in the many  
 Rescues of this holy and just Man, out of many  
 Perils and great Dangers; but in his very surpri-  
 sing Promotion there. That this Truth is like-  
 wise farther confirmed by God's making all  
 the Evil, which *Joseph's* incensed Brethren  
 wrought against him, to turn, not only to his  
 great Advancement, but through that Means, to  
 their own Preservation also, (as before) and of  
 their Removal into the land of *Goshen*, a pleasant  
 and



SERMON and plenteous Country. Surely this, all this, must needs be the Lord's Doing, and affords us a forcible Argument to assert the Credibility of a particular Providence. But then, let none from hence think, that they may do Evil, that Good may come: No; The Evil intended, and done, by Joseph's Brethren, was purely theirs; but all the Good which came of it, was God's Doing only, who permitted them to vent their Malice on him; but by his wise and good Providence, made use of it to accomplish his own secret Councils, upon that Occasion. So Joseph rightly observed, Gen. l. 2. *Ye (said he to his Brethren) thought Evil against me, but God meant it unto Good; Agreeable where-to, are his Words in my Text. God sent me before you, to preserve you a Posterity in the Earth, and to save your Lives by a great Deliverance: So now, it was not you who sent me hither, but God.* Now from what has been said, in largely opening these Words, two general Propositions evidently do result, or follow.

*First, That Almighty God is in no wise the Author of the Evil of Sin, nor in any Sort concerned therein, either in the Way of Causality, or of Concurrence with secondary Causes; because he has solemnly declared, not only that He hath no Pleasure in Wickedness; but that He is a God whose Eyes are purer than to behold Iniquity. Habbak. i. 13.* It farther follows,

*Secondly, That God in his good Providence, not seldom so ordereth the Matter, as to bring Good out of the evil Intentions, and the*

the sinful Actions of wicked Men; as in the *SERMON*  
*Case of Joseph's Brethren.* V.

*Thirdly*, I shall make an Inference of two.  
*And*

*Fourthly and Lastly*, I will close all with some  
 few Words of serious Application of the  
 whole unto our selves. But

*First*, That Almighty God is in no wise the  
 Author of the Evil of Sin, nor in any Sort con-  
 cerned therein; neither in the Way of Causality,  
 or of Concurrence with secondary Causes; because  
 he has solemnly declared, not only *that he hath*  
*no Pleasure in Wickedness*; but that *he is a God,*  
*whose Eyes are purer than to behold Iniquity*, Hab.  
 i. 13. And here, it is not at all strange, that the  
 Heathen World, so ignorant as the Generality of  
 them were (and yet still are) of the only true  
 God, should be much puzzled to find out the  
 original Cause of Evil in the Earth: and it is yet  
 more to be admired, how they did stumble on  
 that whimsical Fancy, as touching two Principles  
 in Nature; the one essentially good, and the other  
 altogether evil; which is a gross Absurdity, un-  
 less they could (as I do not find they ever did)  
 have found out the true Origin from whence  
 these two pretended Principles were derived;  
 which questionless they would have attempted at  
 least, had they been able. Now, though some  
 fanciful Christians of old, [the *Gnostics*, the *Me-*  
*nandrians*, *Valentinians*, and *Marcionites*] mingling  
 the *Ethnic* Fables with the Truths of Christiani-  
 ty, weakly espoused the forementioned erroneous  
 Opinion: yet, after all, the Account which *Mo-*



S E R M. *ses* gives, as concerning the first Entrance of Sin  
 .V into the World, in *Genesis*, the most antient and  
 ~~~~~ authentick History in the World, is the truest  
 and fullest of all others; not only upon the Score
 of the divine Authority of that Book, but for
 that it assigns the original Cause of the Seduction
 of our First Parents to Sin and Death, was the
 Devil, who was a Rebel against God, as well as
 a Murderer and a Lyar from the Beginning,
 and therefore was cast down from Heaven above,
 into Hell beneath; and coveting Society in his
 Ruin, he proved the Instrument (as doubtless he
 imagined) of the like Ruin to Mankind. And
 this gives a short, but full Account, by what
 Means Sin first entered into the World, and
 Death by Sin (pursuant to the Penalty of the
 Law, *Gen. ii. 17.*) and so *Death* [ever since the
 Breach of that Law] *bath passed upon all Men, for
 that all have sinned, Rom. v. 12.* Now from hence
 it follows, that God, being in himself essentially
 holy and good; yea, the Fountain of all Good,
 or the sovereign Good, or even Goodness itself;
 I say, such a Being as God is, could by no Means
 be the Author or Abettor of Evil, or the Cause
 of Sin: neither could he in the least concur with
 his Creatures therein. No; that would be not
 only contradictory to the Nature of God (as be-
 fore) but to the divine Will also, as revealed in
 his Laws; the End of which is to restrain Man-
 kind from committing Sin. Indeed it is said,
*Amos 36, Shall there be Evil in a City, and the
 Lord bath not done it?* But it is evident that the
 Evil there spoken of, is only the Evil of Pu-
 nishment for Sin; as appears from the general
 Tenour of the Chapter. But for the rest, certain
 it is, that God cannot act against himself, or con-
 trary

trary to his Perfections, or inconsistently with S E R M.
himself; all which, (with Reverence be it spo- V.
ken) must be said of him, were he an Abettor of
the Evil of Sin. No; O mighty God, Thou
art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil; nor, for
that Reason, canst thou [with the least Approba-
tion] look upon Iniquity, (as before) Howso-
ever, what is very consistent with the Mercy,
and the Goodness of Almighty God, is as follows:

Secondly, That his wise Providence not seldom
so ordereth Matters, as to bring Good out of the
evil Intentions and sinful Actions of malicious,
wicked Men; as in the fore-stated Case of *Joseph*
and his Brethren. This Instance, I say, in all its
several Turns, and the whole Progress thereof,
from first to last, was, as to the Good which
came of it, manifestly the Lord's Doing, and is
a very plain Argument for asserting a particular
Providence as well can be; for it evidently
makes it appear, that God can bring Good out of
Evil, when, and as often as he pleases, and yet
continue Holy in all his Ways. Indeed God's
thus doing, is an Instance both of his Wisdom
and Goodness. I do not find in the sacred Histo-
ry, hardly any Instances, that in all Circumstan-
ces, do come up to that of *Joseph*, which I have
at large opened unto you; not but many others
there are, and those very remarkable ones too,
recorded in the sacred Books, which merit our
heedful Notice; as they all agree, or conspire (as
it were) to proclaim the wonderful Works of
God; and to be so many evident Testimonies of
a particular Providence in the World: such as
were these following Instances, which (in passing)
I can only at present very briefly mention.

E

I. *Abraham*

Of the Wisdom and Goodness

S E R M.

V.



1. *Abraham* his being preserved, and supported in a strange Land, and in the Land of *Egypt*, by the Hand of God, whose Friend he was.

2. *Moses* the Servant of the Lord, was not only in his Infancy wonderfully preserved in *Egypt*, but when after his Departure thence, he kept Sheep in the Desert, he was called to the Office of a Captain-General of God's People, to deliver them out of Bondage, and to bring them within Sight of the Land of *Canaan*.

3. *Saul* his Promotion was remarkable also, for as he sought his Father's Asses that were gone astray; he, by the Direction of Providence, stumbled on a Crown.

4. To the same Guidance, was the Exaltation of *David*, from following his Father's Sheep, to the Throne; or to be the Shepherd of God's People, or King over *Israel*. In short, the Time would fail me, should I at large insist on, the many other surprizing Instances recorded in the Bible: Such as

5. God's hiding the Prophet *Jeremiah*, and preserving him alive.

6. Also, the miraculous Deliverance of *Daniel* out of the Lion's Den; and of his Country-men *Shadrac*, *Meshec*, and *Abednego*, out of the fiery Furnace: and soon after, the Exaltation of the former to be a prime Minister of State to a King of the largest Empire or Dominion in the World, at that Time; and of the three latter, to Places of great Honour and Trust.

7. I cannot but mention here, how wonderfully Saint *John* the Evangelist and Divine, was by the same Hand of Providence preserved; when being persecuted, he was cast into a boiling

or

or (as some report it) an inflamed Caldron of Oil, S E R M.
V.
and came forth alive, yea, unhurt; and continu-
ed so to a good old Age.

Now who can have the Face (supposing the Truth of the several forementioned Facts) to doubt, but that such Events as cannot be imputed to meer Chance, must rather be ascribed to the Almighty alone, and as they come forth from the Lord, who is wonderful in Council, and excellent in Working, *Isaiah xxviii. 29*; so they are, one and all, such clear Proofs of a special Providence, as cannot, by any Colour of Reason, be called in Question. But to proceed.

Thirdly, I am to make an useful Inference of two, and so go on to the Application of the whole unto our selves. And

1st, As it is evident from what has been said, that the Providence of God ordereth the Occurrences of all Events to their appointed Ends; so we ought from thence to learn, to acquiesce in his Determinations; who is a present Help in any needful Time of Trouble, and consequently knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations, [to Evil,] *as neither being himself tempted therewith, nor tempting any Man thereto, James i. 13.* But He reserveth the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished, *2 Pet. ii. 9.* Again,

2^{dly}, Seeing all our Concerns are in God's Hand, at his Disposal, and under the Care and Direction of his most just and wise Providence: This may serve to teach us, patiently to wait God's Leisure, and to expect (if we endeavour to deserve it at his Hands) in his due Time, to be delivered out of all our Troubles.

S E R M.

V.



gdy then, This that I have said, may serve also to reprove all who are impatient under Afflictions, and such also who distrust the Goodness of God to them in the Land of the living; and murmur and repine at the Dispensations of his good Providence, and in so doing, kick against the Pricks, or even fight against God. It now only remains,

Fourthly and Lastly, That I make some brief Application of what has been said, and so conclude. Well then, seeing Time and Chance do happen to all Men; so that no Man knoweth what a Day may bring forth, in so uncertain a State as here below, Let us evermore trust in the Lord, and do Good. Yea, Let us delight in the Lord, and commit our Ways to him. I say, Trust ye in him, and he shall bring forth your Righteousness as the Light, and your Judgment as the Noon-day. But fret not thy self because of the evil Doers; for yet a little while and the wicked shall not be. But the meek shall be refreshed in the Abundance of Peace, Psalm xxxvii. In short, in any Day of Adversity consider, and wait patiently on the Lord with Resignation; and by good Hope, firm to the End. And in the Day of Prosperity, be not high-minded, but fear. Take such Allotment as God bestows on you in good Part (be it much, or be it little) and be thankful for it: Use it well, to the Glory of God: And forget not the poor and needy. Finally, in whatsoever State we are, let us learn therewith to be content.

And do Thou, O Lord, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up

up in thy stedfast Fear and Love: Keep us **SERM.**
 under the Protection of thy good Providence, **V.**
 and make us to have a perpetual Fear and
 Love of thy Holy Name, through Jesus Christ
 our Lord. To whom, with the Father and
 the Holy Ghost, be given, &c.

E 3

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Of the Restraints, whereby God's Providence with-holds wicked Men from afflicting his faithful Servants.

NUMBERS XXIV. 13.

If Balak would give me his House full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the Commandment of the Lord, to do either Good or Bad of mine own Mind: but what the Lord saith, that will I speak.

SERM.
VI.

THESE Words, with the Addition of what follows in my Text, namely these following [*The Commandment of the Lord to do either Good or Bad of mine own Mind: but what the Lord saith, that will I speak*] are a Recital of what Balaam told the Messengers Balak sent a second Time, to solicit him to come and curse the Israelites; when they came, and pitched (their Camp) in the Plains of Moab, chap. xxii. 18. And this (with the forementioned Addition) Balaam, being permitted by Almighty God to go to Moab, at his first Interview with Balak, spake

spake again to him ; not so much to encourage that Prince ; but rather decently to excuse his own Inability to curse those whom God had blessed ; or as that false Prophet (though he loved the Wages of Unrighteousness) yet in Virtue of that Spirit he was acted by, he could not be ignorant, that the Lord Omnipotent, whom he called his God, (in the Chapter and Verse I last referred you to) could either baffle so rash an Enterprize as *Balak* required of him ; or else (as it accordingly fell out in the Event) turn it into a Blessing to his peculiar People, but make it prove a Curse to *Balak* and the *Moabites*. For there is no Restraint unto the Lord ; and who then can curse them whom he hath blessed ? or who can bless those whom he hath cursed ? And therefore, *Balaam* being arrived at *Moab*, after his having made several Attempts in vain to curse the Lord's People ; and not only so, but was made by a superiour Power, to bless them. *Balak* was thereupon greatly incensed, and his Anger was kindled against the Prophet, whom having reproached, he dismissed. However, *Balaam*, before his Departure, spake in his own Vindication, as in the Words of my Text : saying to *Balak* ; *Spake I not unto thy Messengers whom thou sentest unto me ? That if Balak would give me his House full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the Commandment of the Lord, to do either Good or Bad of mine own Mind : but what the Lord saith, that will I speak.* To which Words, in this historical Way of opening them, I only add Saint Peter's Remark, 2 Ep. ii. 16. How God rebuked *Balaam* for his (intended) Iniquity, by making the dumb Ass speak with Man's Voice, whereby he forbade the Madness of the Prophet ; (i. e.) held him back

S E R M. from the Wages of Unrighteousness, which *Balak*
 VI. tempted him withal. This being premised, I gather from the Words before us, the following Observation ; (namely) that from God's restraining the Power of wicked and malicious Men, and turning their Curses into Blessings upon good Men, on whom the Curse causeless will not come ; but rather will recoil, and fall heavily upon their Heads who pour them forth ; as in the very remarkable Case now before us. And this, I conceive, is another good Argument to prove a special or particular Providence by. Here then,

First, I shall shew, that in Fact this not seldom, is really so. Then

Secondly, I shall propound some good Reasons, why it is so.

Thirdly, I shall make some few Inferences ; and so

Fourthly and *Lastly*, In the Close of all, apply what shall be said, unto our selves.

First then, That in Fact it not seldom really is so, as I said even now, may be made evidently appear :

1st. In a more general Way, from the Word of God, as concerning his peculiar Attributes ; *As the Lord*, by his irresistible Power, *alone restraineth the Spirit of Princes, and is wonderful among the Kings of the Earth ; that he alone turneth their Hearts as the Rivers of Water, even whithersoever he will ; that he breaketh the Power of the*
 ungodly

ungodly and malicious, 'till he find none; and S E R M
consequently that being a present Help in the VI.
needful Time of Trouble, *He will make bare his Arm, and arise to help all the Meek upon Earth: but he will also resist the Proud; yea, that he will turn the Fierceness of Man, to his (own) Praise, by restraining its Rage; and finally, from hence it is very plain, that this is the Heritage of the Servants of the Lord, that no Weapon formed against them shall prosper, Isaiah liv. 17. In short, God bringeth the Righteous out of Trouble: but he letteth the Runagates continue in Scarceness. For, God is a Sun, and a Shield [to cherish and protect his Elect] Yea, the Lord will give Grace and Glory: and no good Thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Thus far in a general Way. I now come*

2dly. To confirm yet farther the Doctrine of my Text, by making an Induction of some particular Acts of God's special Providence over the Righteous, and protecting them from the Insults of their Enemies, (and that sometimes in a strange Manner, as Experience shews.) And here, as to the Objects about which the good Providence of God is employed in Favour of good Men.

First then, As to our grand Adversary the Devil; whom, with all his Works, we renounced at our Baptism; and though we are bound thereby all our Days to resist him, that he may flee from us: yet is our Strength but small, or too weak to withstand all his crafty Wiles, and insidious Devices, and manifold Temptations, did not God, who sent his only begotten Son into the World to destroy Satan's Works, display his own sovereign Power likewise in checking and restraining the furious Rage of evil Spirits, and hindering

S E R M. hindering them from doing the Mischief to Man-
 VI. kind, which they would otherwise do, were they not
 kept *under Chains of Darkness by God's casting them
 down to Hell*, 2 Pet. ii. 4. So that, since Christ
 was manifested in the Flesh, and brought Life
 and Immortality to Light, through the Gospel;
 Satan's going to and fro in the Earth, and walk-
 ing up and down therein (as of old he did) is
 very much restrained, otherwise than when he is
 let loose as an Instrument of God's vindictive
 Justice against the wicked World of ungodly Sin-
 ners. But, as in the Case of Holy *Job*, even in
 the Way of Trial, the wicked one cannot, with-
 out God's Permission, go beyond the Length of
 his Tedder [or Chain] to harm any upright, good
 Christian, who feareth God and escheweth Evil.
 To conclude this Particular, the Words of Saint
John the Divine, do shew, that *the Power of the
 Prince of the Air is cut shorter, and his Dominion
 less extensive now than once it was*, Rev. xii. 9. 12.
 And so again

Secondly, As to the inveterate Malice, and
 Rage of evil Men, of unjust Oppressors, and
 bloody Persecutors: These also are under like Re-
 straints, with *their Father, the Devil, whose Works
 they do*. So that, albeit they continually plot and
 contrive Mischief: yet they cannot go beyond their
 appointed Line; nor be able to withstand the De-
 termination of the over-ruling Providence of God;
*whose single Council shall stand against (and bring to
 Nought) the many Devices of the Heart of Man*,
 Prov. xix. 21. This appears plainly to have
 been *Balak's Case* (as I shewed you before) and
 the like wonderful Defeats, several other great
 Princes have in all Ages met withal, as History,
 both sacred and secular do testify. I in a late
 Discourse

Discourse gave you a great Variety of Instances S E R M.
of God's special Care over many good Men, not VI.
only by preserving some from imminent Danger,
or even Death it self; but by unexpectedly pro-
moting others to great Honour in the World:
And as such Instances of the watchful Care of Pro-
vidence over single, or individual Persons, who
do excel in Virtue, and endeavour to hold the
Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience, are a
manifest Argument of a particular Providence,
(as before) so, God's special Protection of his
Church, and faithful People in all Ages, is a
plain Proof of the same. Witness in the first
Place, God's Care over the Posterity of faithful
Abraham in Egypt; his wonderful Protection from
the Effects of *Pharoah's* cruel Tyranny over
them, in many Instances, well known; and his
bringing them out of Bondage, *with an high Hand,*
and an out-stretched Arm; by his carrying them
miraculously through the Red Sea, and turning
the Waters upon the *Egyptians*, to their Over-
throw therein; which wonderful Deliverance out
of Bondage notwithstanding, that People very
soon murmured against *Moses* their Captain-Ge-
neral, and hankered after the Flesh-pots, the
Garlick, and the Onions, of *Egypt*, and provo-
ked the Lord to Anger upon very many Occa-
sions, during the Space of Forty Years in the
Wilderness, and particularly at the Waters of
Meribah; and by their making a golden Calf,
in Imitation of the Idols of *Egypt*, and their ido-
latrous Worship thereof, in the Absence of *Mo-*
ses in the Mount, and through the Compliance of
Aaron with their Desires, which highly displeased
God; and so again did the open Rebellion of
Corah and his Accomplices, as not only appeared
by

S E R M. by the Earth's swallowing them up alive; but
 VI. by God's bringing on that perverse People a devouring Pestilence also. It would be tedious to recount all the Revolts of that stiff-necked People; the History whereof *Moses* has recorded in *Exodus*, and the two following Books. The Event was, that neither *Moses* nor *Aaron*, nor any one Soul that came out of *Egypt* with them (except *Caleb* and *Joshua*) lived to enter into the Land of *Canaan*. And this was that good Land which God long before promised unto *Abraham*, unto *Isaac*, and unto *Jacob*, to give unto their Seed, Deut. xxxiv. 4. And this Promise the Lord made good unto as many as were born in the Wilderness, by driving out and subduing the seven Nations before them, under the Conduct of *Joshua*; a Man, who by Imposition of *Moses's* Hands upon him, was full of the Spirit of Wisdom (verse 9. of the Chapter I last mentioned) and thereby enabled to settle God's People in that good Land, by Lot, Tribe by Tribe. All this was the Lord's Doing; and ought still to be wonderful even in our Eyes. Being thus planted in quiet and safe Possession of *Canaan*; there is one Thing, which is so very remarkable (as to the Continuance, and Security of *Israel*, in such their Possession, for many Ages) as to be here taken Notice of, and it is as followeth; *i. e.* That whereas by the *Levitical Law* of *Moses*, All their Males in their Land, were (if able) to go up three Times in every Year, to appear before the Lord, in the Place where the Lord should place his Name. Exod. xxxiv. 23. it might be feared, when the Borders of their Country lay thus open, and exposed to their Enemies on every Side, in the Absence of their Males; this would have terrified

fied that People beyond Measure, no Doubt, had not God, at the same Time, eased them of that Fear by Promise, verse 24. *I will cast out the Nations before thee, and enlarge thy Borders: neither (said God) shall any Man desire thy Land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the Year.* Now here I observe, not only that their Enemies (who probably did not want Ill-will, nor Force, to annoy that People) were yet so far held back from invading God's People, that their Hands were useless, or (as it were) fetter'd: but their very Desires, or Wills, were as under an Arrest, upon those Occasions: no Part of the *Jewish* History affording so much as one Instance of any Invasion of that Sort, till the *Jews* had forsaken God, and rejected, and crucified the Lord of Life, and imprecated the Guilt of his innocent Blood on themselves and their Posterity; and then the *Romans* came, and took away their Place and Nation. Once more: The Church of Christ under the Protection of God's good Providence hath stood out many dreadful Shocks and violent Opposition for many Ages past; not only by ten bloody Persecutions under the Pagan Emperors: but through many Dissentions among *Christians* themselves also in all Times; and by the Invasion of the barbarous Nations, which let in, or made way for, that dark Cloud of Ignorance and Superstition, which even yet is to be seen in a certain Church which calls herself *Catholic*: All which notwithstanding, together with a great Shoal of Infidels and Apostates, who have insulted the true Church of Christ in an outrageous Manner of late: Yet he, who built his Church, upon a Rock, against which the Gates of Hell shall not prevail, hath likewise promised

to

SERM.
VI.

S E R M. to be with his little Flock always, even unto the
 VI. End of the World, *Matt. xxviii. 20.* So then,
 Why do the Infidels rage, and imagine a vain
 Thing? and the great Men of the Earth set them-
 selves, and the Rulers take Council together, against
 the Lord, and against his Christ? Seeing he who
 sitteth in the Heaven shall laugh [at them] and the
 Lord shall have them in Derision, *Psaln ii. 1, 2, 4.*
 Having thus at large considered the Works of
 Providence in Relation to God's putting malici-
 ous Men under Restraints, and shewn that it is
 so; I come

Secondly, Very briefly to enquire, Why it is
 so? And

1. Good and upright Men cannot pretend, that
 they are able to defend themselves, by their own
 Policy and Strength, against the Floods of ungod-
 ly Men. No, I know, (*saith Jerem. chap. x. 23.*)
that the Way of Man is not in himself, nor is it
in him who walketh to direct his Steps. Let no Man
then be wise in his own Conceit. For

2. As God's Goodness alone moves him to give
 us his gracious Promises, for our Protection and
 Safe-guard: So, if we love, serve, and obey him,
 with an upright Mind, and believe on Him in
 Humility and Dependance, we may then in all
 good Reason expect, that God's Wisdom and
 Goodness will move him to perform, whatsoever
 he hath in his holy Word promised the faithful,
 the rather

3. Because he is a God of Truth, and faithful
 to his Promises; so, as never to fail such, who
 do walk uprightly before him. I say, as God
 never fails such, upon his Part; so, the Blame
 must lie on theirs who ask and receive not; be-
 cause

cause they ask amiss, either as to, or in the Mat-^{S E R M 2}
ter, or Form of their Prayers and Requests to VI.
God. Hence therefore let us learn, 

Thirdly, (and in a Word, for Want of Time to enlarge on them) the following good Uses of the aforesaid Doctrine of the Text: (i.e.)

1st, To believe and hope in God, as he is faithful and just to his Promises.

2^{dly}, To wait his Leisure in the Performance, with Patience and Resignation to his Will and good Pleasure.

3^{dly}, To accept his gracious Benefits, in all Humility, and with all Gratitude; evermore praising his holy Name.

Fourthly and Lastly then, The better to persuade us all to the Practice of all this, permit me, in the Close, seriously to apply what has been said, and to conclude. If then, God can defeat the wicked Attempts of his, and our Enemies, and will, if we trust in him, bring them to Nought; Let us place our Confidence in Him, *who careth for us, and not fear what Man can do unto us: Seeing it is he who justifieth the Righteous, who then can condemn him? and who is he (whether Devil or Man) that can harm us, if we be Followers of that which is good? Fear not them then who can kill (but) the Body: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell.* Bless the Lord for all his Benefits, and call upon him in your Distress or Trouble, and distrust not his Goodness to you in any needful Time of Trouble. In a Word, call upon God while he is near, and forsaking all your wicked Ways, and evil Thoughts, return unto the Lord
your

S E R M. your God, and he will have Mercy (on you) and
 VI. abundantly pardon you. To answer so good a
 Purpose, I cannot better close up the foregoing
 Discourse, than with the following good Prayer,
 which our Church has taught us.

O Almighty God! Who alone canst order the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men; Grant unto thy People, that they may love the Thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise: that so among the sundry and manifold Changes of this World, our Hearts may surely there be fixed, where true Joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N

SERMON VII.

Of God's so ordering of casual Events, as to make them rather Arguments for, than against, His over-ruling Providence.

ECCLESIASTES IX. II.

I returned, and saw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor Riches to the Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them all.

THOUGH as Solomon observed other where in this excellent Book of the Preacher, which is fraught with many notable Observations, in Relation to the Affairs of this lower World, its Vicissitudes and Vanities; that *there is one Event to the righteous, and to the wicked, verse 2.* Yea, albeit in the Words now before us, Mention is made of Chance, as happening to all: Yet, upon Supposition of the Existence of a God, who is the first Cause, and the last End of all Things: that Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which were employed first in cre-

F

ating

SERMON
VII.

S E R M. ating the World, and all Things therein, must
 VII. needs be able to uphold and preserve, to govern
 and guide every Thing (though by Ways surpris-
 ingly strange to us) to its appointed End; as
 to Him seem good. And allowing this to be
 what is both just and reasonable too, it will fol-
 low, that the Almighty's over-ruling of even ca-
 sual or fortuitous Events, is (I conceive) what
 affords a good Argument to prove, that God's
 Providence is alone sufficient to govern, order,
 and direct the Affairs of the World, and to ad-
 minister in every one of them; even to the fal-
 ling of a Sparrow to the Ground, or an Hair of
 our Head; all which are numbered by Him,
Matt. x. 30. But though the Power and Wis-
 dom of God, and his Goodness to enforce both,
 are in Truth commensurate with himself; inso-
 much that as *Solomon* observes (verse 1. above my
 Text) *The wise, and their Works are in the Hand*
of God; nevertheless evil Men (who wax worse
 and worse) will take upon them to find fault
 with, and to be carping at Providence; and
 that, because *the Heart of the Sons of Men is full*
of Evil, and Madneſs while they live, verses 2, 3.
 Some unadvisedly casting off the Use of Means
 altogether in order to attain to their End, because
 the Event doth not always answer their Expecta-
 tion: while others rashly fall into a contrary Ex-
 treme, by so entirely depending on their own
 Wisdom, Strength, and Skill, as to overlook
 Providence, and to confide so much in the Efficacy
 of second Causes, as not to look up to the
 first. Whereas if the Matter be well weighed in
 the Balance of Reason, casual Events (those Rid-
 dles of Providence) are here made Use of, by
 the wise Preacher, as a Preservative against Infi-
 delity

delity and Scepticism, much rather than to be the S E R M. unhappy Occasion of falling into either, or both. VII. But how absurd soever the Conduct of such unreasonable Men is, appears from hence, that it is not here said, that the Race is *never* to the swift, nor the Battle to the strong (and so of the rest,) but only intimated that it is *not always so*; but every one knows that sometimes it falls out otherwise. But how this is any such Impeachment of Providence, as to attribute all to blind Chance, I cannot see for my Part, even though Time and Chance happen to all Men. Seeing what is Chance as to us Men, is most wise Design in Almighty God. So that it is an high Presumption in any Child of Man to trust too much unto, or too confidently to rely upon, his own Parts or Abilities, Wisdom or Strength, Cunning or Dexterity in Business, for Success in whatever he sets his hand unto. Whereas they ought rather to leave all to the Guidance and Government of God's Providence, praying for an happy Issue of their lawful Undertakings; and doing their own best and honest Endeavours, and then being content, whatever Turn their Affairs take in this World; where Experience shews us, that *the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill: but Time and Chance happeneth to them all.* Which Words do intimate, that the Event doth not always fall out according to the Operation of second Causes, nor doth the End always answer the Means used to compass it by; which the following general Reason may well account for; because was it otherwise, most People's Dependence upon God's Providence, would, in all Probability,

S E R M. bability, soon be at an End, or very much in
 VII. the Wane. Now all this must so fall out by the
 ~~~~~ Interposition of an over-ruling Providence, that  
*the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the*  
*Strong, &c.* Having premised thus much, I  
 next come to shew you,

*First*, That it is so, *very often*, as Solomon asserts  
 in the Words before me. And then I shall  
 enquire,

*Secondly*, Why it is so ordered by the Provi-  
 dence of God? And

*Thirdly*, I shall attempt farther to shew, that  
 God's thus interposing in the Affairs of Man-  
 kind (as far forth as we can judge concern-  
 ing it) is so far from being to our Hurt,  
 that it is rather vastly to our Advantage.

*Fourthly*, I shall make some few Inferences  
 from what shall be said. And

*Fifthly and Lastly*, I shall conclude all with  
 a few Words of Application to our selves.  
 I am

*First*, to shew you, That it is so *very often*, as  
 Solomon asserts in the Words before me. Which  
 will soon appear, if I go over all the Particulars  
 which Solomon here instanced in. As

*1st*, [*The Race is not to the Swift.*] Now in a  
 Race, though many may run, yet only one gets the  
 Prize. And true it is, that according to general  
 Expectation, he, even the swiftest, bids fairest to  
 win it; however, it *sometimes* falleth to another's  
 Lot,

Lot, though there seemed to have been great S E R M. Odds against him, before the Course began. VII. That this is frequently true in Fact, I think none can, or will deny. This possibly may so fall out by some strange unforeseen Accident (as we call it;) but can be no more without the Disposition of God's general Providence, than without his Knowledge, who made all Things in Number, in Weight, and in Measure; and therefore governs, guides, and directs, every Thing according to his own Will and good Pleasure. In whose Sight, what is casual or contingent to us, is present to his Eyes, and looked quite through by him. Thus Solomon saith, *It is God who directeth even the fortuitous Cast of the Lot*, Prov. xvi. 33. Again,

2dly, *Neither is the Battle* [always won] *by the Strong*, or mighty Men; for though, one would think, the more numerous Forces, and greater Strength in the Field, should in Course win the Victory, and give a glorious Success to the stronger Side: yet nevertheless when the Almighty pleases to exert his irresistible Strength, he, by the feeblest, and most despicable Instrument, hath often gotten to himself the Victory. Thus *Jonathan* and his Armour-bearer, encouraged by his Chieftan's Word, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. first discomfited, and then put to flight, the whole Garrison of the *Philistines*. Thus, the Battle is the Lord's, to whom there is no Restraint to save by many, or by few. Again,

3dly, *Neither yet is Bread to the Wise*; For sometimes it happens that Men of bright Parts and great Abilities, are yet so disregarded and overlooked (like the poor Man who by his Wisdom delivered a City in Distress) as to be



S E R M. forced, by the Straitness of their Circumstances,  
 VII. to struggle with many Difficulties, if not with  
 the Want of the Comforts of Life; and consequently to become the Scorn of more fortunate, but less deserving People; who prosper in the World, and have possess'd themselves with Riches [to speak softly] more by *Chance* than *Merit*: The Histories of all Ages will furnish out Instances of this Kind. And so again,

4thly, The same may undoubtedly be said, as to what follows (*viz.*) *that neither are Riches to Men of Understanding*: This seems somewhat strange indeed, that Men well versed in the Business and Concerns, the Intercourses and Traffick of humane Life, should yet fail in their Acquisitions of Wealth and good Substance. But when all is done, Men were not all made of the same Mold; some, whose Minds soar higher than the *dirty Planet* we live on, are fitter for Contemplation, than for what worldly-wise Men call Business (in their Sense) when those I last mentioned, do drudge, and plod on, and employ all their Thoughts, and Endeavours too, upon the present Things of this World; and truly, slender Abilities will fit any one (almost) to be good for themselves; though good for nothing, nor for any Body else, but themselves. Once more:

5thly, Though no Man can reasonably doubt that Men of Skill, or of noted Experience in their respective Callings and Employments, do *merit* the Favour and Countenance of great Men, rather than others who are less deserving in the same Way (whatever it may be;) yea, though *Solomon* the Wise thought the Man who was diligent in his Business was worthy to stand before Princes, yet the same *Solomon* observes, that such  
 Men

Men of Skill do *not always* meet with Favour, or S E R M.  
VII.  
*due* Encouragement answerable to their Works or  
Deserts: but are *not seldom* forced to mingle with  
the Crowd, and to sit down with mean Men; as  
being topt upon by some more fortunate Upstart,  
who by some lucky Hit, or paultry Accident or  
other, has got the Start of his better-deserving  
Fellow-citizen. Having shewn you that it is so,  
as *Solomon* affirms in my Text, (and as the noted  
Experience of the World also testifies) that it so  
*frequently* falleth out; I next proceed farther to  
shew you,

*Secondly*, Why Matters are thus ordered by the  
Providence of God so much beside the Expectati-  
on of Men, as to casual Events, which frequent-  
ly happen quite contrary to the ordinary Course  
of Things. And here these two following Rea-  
sons may suffice at present.

*1st*, That the Uncertainty of such Events as  
the Wise Man instanceth in, (and of other like)  
may make us look beyond second Causes; and  
carry us up in all Humility, to contemplate the  
first Cause, even that Almighty Being, in whose  
Hand, and under whose Guidance and Directi-  
on, all Things must needs be. And

*2dly*, That from such a Disposition of Things,  
we, (conscious to our selves of our own *Nothing-  
ness in God's Sight*) may thence learn, faithfully  
to believe, and firmly to depend upon, the Pro-  
vidence of God. And

*1st*, That the Uncertainty of casual Events  
ought (in all good Reason) to make us look be-  
yond second Causes; and to carry us up to con-  
template, in all Humility, the first Cause; in  
whose Hand, and at whose Disposition, all



S E R M. Things must needs be: For, should we be so  
 VII. vain as to expect, that the Event should *always*  
 correspond with the Means made use of to obtain  
 it by; or be so *childish* as to suppose it. (Good  
 God!) how arrogant and presumptuous, how  
 proud and insolent, and how forgetful of God's  
 Providence, would Men soon become! How for-  
 ward to ascribe all Success to their own Wisdom  
 and Cunning, Strength and Abilities! Yea, how  
 apt also to despise others of a lower Measure of  
 worldly Wisdom, and to insult them, and (as it  
 were) to trample them under Foot! So that,  
 herein appear the unsearchable Wisdom of God,  
 and his unspeakable Goodness too, in setting all  
 Men upon the Level, in Regard of the aforesaid  
 Uncertainty of Events, that no Man should glo-  
 ry but in the Lord, *Who maketh Diviners mad*  
 (who pretend to foretell contingent Events by the  
 Stars, or otherwise) *and who turneth wise Men*  
*backward, and maketh their Knowledge foolish,*  
 Isaiah xlv. 25. Eliphaz also in the Book of Job  
 well remarks, *That God openeth the Ears, and*  
*sealeth the Instruction of Man, that he might with-*  
*draw Man from his Purpose, and hide Pride from*  
*him,* Chap. xxxiii. 16, 17. (that is) saith a learn-  
 ed Paraphrast, "God (as it were) whispers In-  
 struction into Man, and so imprints it in their  
 Minds, not as to make them understand all  
 the secret Reasons of his Providence, but to  
 dispose them humbly to submit thereunto." Or  
 thus, God so orders Things here upon Earth, as  
 at once to encourage us to use the Means; but so  
 as still to keep us in a continual Dependence  
 upon himself as to their Efficacy, and Success al-  
 so. And so again

2dly, When

2dly, When we make Use of the lawful S E R M. Means in order to attain some End propounded; VII. whether we do, (as sometimes we may) succeed in our Undertakings, and that (perhaps) beyond our Expectations: or whether, at other Times, though we use the same Means, and equal Care, Diligence, and Application also, we may yet miscarry: So then, in either Case, we ought to consider, that it is God, who is over all, that checks and over-rules the Projects and Devices of Men, as he alone is the most High over all the Earth, *Psal. lxxxiii. 13.* So then, God's interposing his Power and Wisdom, in disposing such Events as seem *fortuitous* to us, though they are *council* to him, *Exod. xxi. 13.* is a strong Argument to induce the Belief of a Providence, and a very good Reason also, why we should rely, and depend firmly thereupon.

Thirdly then, I am briefly to shew, that Almighty God's interposing in the Affairs of this lower World, is so far from the Hurt of his Creatures, that (unless when he visiteth them in Judgment and Vengeance, as he did the hardened *Jews*) it turns rather to their great Advantage, and that many ways. I have already shewn this in Part, and shall here add,

1st, That the serious Consideration of the natural Weakness of any Creature to produce very considerable Effect in the ordinary Course of Things, will direct us, not only to perceive our own Nothingness, but to make us look up to God on high, in whom we do all live, and move, and who gave us our very Being. And that his watchful Providence is over us continually for our Good, (if we live in his Fear, and cast our Care, and depend,



S E R M. pend, on Him) he will not leave nor forsake us,

VII. *but make all Things work together for Good; according to his Promise, Rom. viii. 28. i. e.* If we perform the Condition upon our Part, God can therein no more deceive us, than he will deny himself: Which being the Case, certainly God must know infinitely better than Man, how to govern and order all Things. Otherwise (as one speaks very well) “ In what an ill State were  
“ Mankind, did not a wise and merciful Hand  
“ govern [ and direct ] what we call Chance and  
“ Fortune! Seeing there are a great many accidental and casual Events (as we call them)  
“ which are of great Consequence, as well to the  
“ Happiness, as to the Miseries of our Lives.  
“ In short then, If Providence governs any Thing,  
“ it must govern Chance, which seems to govern almost every Thing else, and which therefore, none but God can govern.” I now proceed,

*Fourthly, To make some Inferences from what hath been said.*

*1st, From what has been said then as to casual Events, we may learn how necessary a Duty it is, to live in the Fear of God, and under a continual Awe of him; who being over all, taketh Care of us, and of our Affairs also; and therefore to have a constant Dependence upon his Providence, whose Eyes run through the Earth, yea, they run to and fro' through the whole Earth, Zachary. iv. 10. If so, his watchful Providence cannot overlook, or be unconcerned at, what befalls any of us; and therefore we ought to do our Duty; to wait also patiently, and to pray heartily*

ly for the desired Success of all our honest Enter-  
prizes, even though our Prayers be not always  
heard: yet, in his own due Time, if in all our  
Ways we acknowledge him, he will direct our  
Path, Prov. iii. 5. Again,

2dly, From the Uncertainty of such Events as  
seem to us to fall out by Accident or meer  
Chance; (though evermore under the Direction of  
Providence) we may plainly see the Vanity of  
being too confident of succeeding in what we take  
in hand, and the Presumption of relying wholly  
upon the Efficacy of second and subordinate Cau-  
ses; not that we are to neglect the Use of just  
and honest Means; but be sure to look up to the first  
Cause, and lean not altogether on a broken Reed:  
it being observable, that such secondary Causes  
are scarce ever more likely to fail Men, than when  
they depend too much on them. No Wonder  
this! *seeing there is no Wisdom, nor Understanding,  
nor Council against the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 30.

3dly, I farther infer from what has been dis-  
coursed, that our many Disappointments of the  
expected Events which are occasioned through the  
Failure of second Causes in their Operations,  
ought to convince us all, that God alone over-  
ruleth what we call Chance or Fortune; and that  
nothing can happen without his *Direction* or *Per-  
mission*, and consequently we have all imaginable  
Reason, to submit with Contentation and Humi-  
lity to God's Will and Wisdom in all Things;  
saying with Resignation, *not our Will, but  
thine, O Lord, be done.*

Fifthly and Lastly, It remains only, that I make  
a serious Application of this whole Matter to our  
selves, and so conclude, "Is it so then, as a learn-  
ed



SERMON. ed Man observed, "that most of Men's Doubts,  
 VII. "as to believing a particular Providence, are  
 founded, either in their Ignorance, Errors, or  
 "Mistakes;" (and it is well if these are not  
 wilful ones too.) For as to such unexpected E-  
 vents as my Text mentions, though they possibly  
 may appear never so casual to Men, are yet all  
 foreseen and ordered by God; "because these  
 "Events are indeed the properest Objects of the  
 "Almighty's Care and Government, as they are  
 "the most visible Demonstration of a superior  
 "Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, by  
 "which God's Providence displays itself to the  
 "World." To draw to a Conclusion, Who is  
 there among you, that knows not, or who can  
 be ignorant, that *the Foolishness of God is wiser,*  
*and the Weakness of God is stronger, than Men?*  
 So the Apostle, 1 Cor. i. 25. *O Man! who art*  
*thou, that disputest against God? shall the Thing*  
*formed say to him who formed it, why hast thou made*  
*me thus?* Rom. ix. 20. No; that would be the  
 Height of presumptuous Insolence do I say, yea of  
 downright Infidelity! Consider then, vain Man,  
 that though (as Solomon saith) *there are many De-*  
*VICES in Man's Heart; nevertheless the Counsel of*  
*the Lord that shall stand,* Prov. xix. 21. (as much  
 as to say) "Though there may be many Designs  
 "and Contrivances in the Minds of Men, which  
 "they may think may be so well laid and con-  
 "certed, that they cannot miscarry; yet some-  
 "times they are all defeated by the over-ruling  
 "Counsel of the Lord; which alone can bring  
 "to pass whatsoever he pleaseth." I shall con-  
 clude all with a good Prayer of our Church.

O God!

O God! whose never failing Providence ordereth **SERM.**  
all Things, both in Heaven and Earth, we hum- **VII.**  
bly beseech Thee, to put away from us all hurt-  
ful Things, and to give us those Things as be  
profitable for Us, through Jesus Christ our  
Lord. To whom, with the Father and the  
Holy Ghost, be all Power and Dominion, Glory  
and Praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

**SERMON**



# SERMON VIII.

That the Sufferings of some good Men in this Life ( which is a State of Probation at best ) are not at all inconsistent with the Belief of the Justice of an over-ruling Providence.

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ECCLESIASTES VIII. Part of the 14th Verse.

*There is a Vanity which is done upon the Earth, that there be just Men unto whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked.*

SERM.  
VIII.

**H**AVING for some Time past asserted, and endeavoured to make Proof of, both a general Providence over all Things visible, and ( to us at present ) invisible, and withal shewing you in several Discourses, that in relation to individual Persons, and to every particular Creature, and to each Event also, this Providence of the Almighty is extended; and though I have (as I well hope) said enough in Proof of all this, both from the holy Scriptures

tures (the Rule of our Faith, and of our Prac-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
tice) and by sound Reason also, enforced the .VIL.  
same, so as to satisfy any unprejudiced, confide-  
rate Person; yet so it is, (or it possibly may be)  
that some weak and ignorant People on the one  
hand, and other some more knowing, but wilful  
and opiniative People on the other, may enter-  
tain, in Favour of their Fancies, or their Lusts,  
such prejudicate Opinions concerning God's Pro-  
vidence, as may at last *strike at* the Belief of the  
very Being of a God, and end in downright In-  
fidelity: I shall therefore, before I close this noble  
Subject, farther attempt to vindicate the Provi-  
dence of God, against the Doubts of the weak,  
and the Cavils of the wilful and sceptical Part of  
Mankind; who either ignorantly, or to cover  
over their Unbelief, do pretend to be dissatisfied  
thereat. I begin with the former. *First*, The  
Doubts of the weak and ignorant, grounded on  
the Words of *Solomon*; who, not only in my  
Text and its Context, observeth, *that there is a*  
*Vanity which is done upon the Earth*; 1st, *That*  
*there be just Men unto whom it happeneth accor-*  
*ding to the Work of the wicked*; And again,  
2dly, *that there be wicked Men unto whom it hap-*  
*peneth according to the Work of the righteous*; but  
withal, he brings in (as in the Person of an Ob-  
jector) this, as one of the Grievances of Man's  
Life; *that all Things come alike to all, (and) there*  
*is one Event to the righteous and to the wicked*; so  
that, *as the Good, so is the Sinner, and he who*  
*sweareth, as he who feareth an Oath*, Chap. ix. 2.  
These are the two Objections mostly urged against  
Providence, and stated by *Solomon* in their full  
Strength, or the utmost they can bear. Yet I  
make no Doubt to affirm, that neither are the  
Sufferings



80 *Of the Sufferings of good Men, &c.*

SERMON. Sufferings of some good Men, nor the Prosperity

VIII. of some bad Men in the present State of Probation in this World, any Impeachment of the Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness of God's Providence; but may well consist therewith. Now my present Undertaking is to shew you, that the Sufferings of some good Men, in the present Life, afford no Argument at all either against Providence in general, or against a particular Providence in this lower World. And here

*First*, I shall offer, in order to make Proof of what I even now laid down, some such Reasons for my Assertion, as may convince and satisfy any rational or unprejudiced Man of the Truth thereof.

*Secondly*, I shall propound some useful Considerations to confirm it by. And then

*Thirdly and Lastly*, Apply the whole to ourselves. As to the

*First* then, &c. I shall endeavour to make Proof thereof, both from Scripture, or such Arguments as the Word of God doth afford us, and as sound Reason will furnish us withal; and in Consequence thereof, from the Testimony of some of the Heathen Writers also; more than which, I conceive, I need not insist upon at present, in so plain a Case. And here,

*Ist*, In a more general Way, I take Leave to appeal to a most invincible Argument (and which leadeth to a divine Revelation,) and that is, to the Nature and to the Attributes of God, the Creator, and the supreme Governour of the World,

*Of the Sufferings of good Men, &c.*

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World, and of all Things therein. Now what SERM.  
VIII. we can conceive of God, is, that he is an eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient, and immutable Being, independent also on all other Beings without himself, as he is without Body, Parts, or Passions. Now these incommunicable Perfections (though we can in no wise comprehend them, do yet) proclaim him to be, what he told *Moses* he was, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth; keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression and Sin; and who will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, and Children's Children. All which speak God also (as to his communicable Attributes) to be a Being (not only transcendently holy and happy in himself; but) good and merciful, powerful, just, and true, and wise also, in Relation to his reasonable Creatures more especially. Yea, (as one speaks) "so wise as he can be, consistently with his infinite Goodness; and so good as he can be, consistently with his infinite Wisdom; yea, so just also, as may consist with his infinite Mercy; and so merciful, as will consist with his infinite Justice:" i. e. in other Words, God is perfectly wise, just and merciful, powerful and true also, and faithful as to his Promises: but as to the impenitent, hardened Sinners, he is a God to whom Vengeance belongeth. Now these general Observations, as concerning the Nature and the Attributes of God, will lead us on*

*1<sup>st</sup>*, To the Scripture-Proof of the Doctrine laid down before, that the Sufferings of some just or good Men in this Life, are no Argument



82 *Of the Sufferings of good Men, &c.*

S E R M. at all against the Providence of God in the present  
VIII. evil World. And this as I conceive,



*Secondly*, may be further made appear, from the following more particular Considerations, grounded on Scripture-evidence.

*1<sup>st</sup>* then, Let it be well considered, that if God should be extreme to mark all that even good and just Men (or so reputed) do amiss, and should, in Vindication of his Justice, enter into Judgment with sinful Man (and who is there, who liveth and sinneth not,) and to punish any such in this World, according to their Deserts, it would follow, in such Case, that there would, on God's Part, be left very little Room (if any) for the Exercise of his Mercy and Long-suffering; and consequently the best of Men would, by that Means, be greater Sufferers than now they are. *And why then doth a living Man complain? a Man for the Punishment of his Sin?* Lament. iii. 39. Especially considering that it is an Act of the divine Goodness *to do Good unto the bad, as well as to the good*, Matt. v. 45. To the former, to reclaim them, and bring them to think so of their Ways, as to repent of, and amend them: and to the latter, to encourage their Virtue; though sometimes God, for their Benefit, corrects them in this Life, that such Chastisement (though now thought to be grievous) *may in the end yield the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness unto them who are exercis'd thereby*, Heb. xii. 11. *i. e.* if they make a good Use of their Afflictions, as holy David did, *Psalms* cxix. 71, 75. But to shew yet farther how very absurd the Outcries are, which some are apt to make

*Of the Sufferings of good Men, &c.* 83

make against Providence, when under deserved S E R M.  
Correction for their Sins. VIII.

2dly, Let this be another Consideration to humble such Murmurers, that they do neither reflect on their own Ignorance, or Want of Knowledge; nor, much less do they seem to consider the infinite Wisdom and Knowledge of God, who must therefore be able to chuse what is best for us; For he knoweth all Things in Heaven and on Earth, in the Sea, and in all deep Places. Yea, to his Eyes (which run through the Earth, beholding the Evil and the Good) all Things are naked and opened; The Lord knoweth the secret Thoughts of Man's Heart: neither is there a Word in our Tongue, but God knoweth it altogether. *And, all the Ways of Man are therefore before the Eyes of the Lord; and he pondereth his Goings, Prov. v. 21. For the Lord is a God of Knowledge, and by him Actions are weighed, 1 Sam. ii. 3. i. e. all the moral Actions of mortal Men, shall be so weighed by the supreme Judge of all the Earth, as in the Balance of the Sanctuary; or in order to render to every one, according to his, or her Doings or Works, whether good or bad. So that, from hence it appears, that the Complaints of some impatient Sufferers (who do not consider, that Man is born to Trouble) are grounded upon the Weakness and Mistakes of those who make them, and to their Hurt, as they are displeasing to Almighty God. I shall add*

3dly, This one Consideration more at present; (namely) That albeit all Things do, in this Life, *seem* in our Eyes, or to our present Apprehension of Things, to happen alike to all; yet, they do *but seem* so, for the Reasons before given (and



SERM. for some others by and by to be alledged) and  
 VIII. yet, mean while upon Supposition that the Suffer-  
 ings of some good Men, and the Prosperity of  
 some wicked Men, were as unequal in this  
 World, as some do imagine them to be, yet nei-  
 ther is the one nor the other any *just Impeachment*  
 of God's good Providence, for this Reason, be-  
 cause a Time will come, when what now *seems*  
*odd* to some, shall, at the Judgment of the great  
 Day of Doom and Recompences, be *set to rights*,  
 and be fully adjusted, and made amends for;  
*seeing the Sufferings of the present Time, if compa-*  
*red with what then shall be revealed in us,* are  
 short, or of no Moment, upon such Comparison  
 with the Glory which the Apostle mentioneth,  
*Rom. viii. 18.* I proceed

2dly, To shew farther, what Arguments solid  
 Reason can also furnish us withal, whereby to  
 vindicate God's Providence in his suffering some  
 good Men to be afflicted in this Life. And here,  
 let none (with the Epicures of old) presume to  
 ask this Question, *Si sit Deus, unde Mala? i. e.*  
 If there is a God, or a Providence over all, from  
 whence then do all the Evils, both natural and  
 moral, which abound in this lower World pro-  
 ceed? To this I reply with *Boethius*, (a supposed  
 Heathen Philosopher) *Si non sit Deus, unde Bo-*  
*na?* If there is no God, no Providence, from  
 whence then come all the good Things we do  
 enjoy in this Life? and which it is out of our  
 Power to acquire, or keep the full Enjoyment of,  
 all our Days. *Seneca* also, a learned Heathen  
 Writer, hath an excellent Tract upon this same  
 Subject; *Cur Mala Bonis accidunt, cum sit Provi-*  
*dentia?* In which are many wise Observations to  
 our present Purpose. “ Thus, saith that grave  
 “ Author,

*Of the Sufferings of good Men, &c.* 85

“ Author, God beareth a fatherly Affection to- S E R M.  
“ wards good Men; and he loveth them by so VIII.  
“ much the more, by how much the more, he  
“ exerciseth them by Labours, Crosses, Losses,  
“ and Hardships, that they may gather true For-  
“ titude, [of Mind] thereby. Again (saith he)  
“ God afflicts, corrects, and tries, those whom  
“ he approves, and loveth: But he reserveth  
“ those whom he seems to be indulgent to, and  
“ to spare, (at present) for future Evils (or Pu-  
“ nishments.)” Many other remarkable Passages  
are found in *Tully*, *Seneca*, and other *Ethnic* Wri-  
ters to the same Purpose, which for Want of  
Time, I must now pass by. In short then, some  
have their good Things, Riches, and Honours,  
and an Affluence of the Comforts and Superflu-  
ities of the present World, for *their Portion* here;  
and well it will be for them, if that be not *their*  
*All*; or that being now comforted, they be not  
hereafter tormented. So then, to conclude this  
Particular; “ The Goodness of God’s Provi-  
“ dence ought not to be measured by the natural  
“ Good or Evil of external Events (here below,  
where, as in a Plague, in a Battle, a Conflagra-  
tion, a Shipwreck, or other publick Calamities,  
no Distinction of Persons can, without Miracles,  
be made :) But the Measure is, such a Tempera-  
ment, or Mixture of Good and Evil as is best  
fitted by the Care of Providence to Man’s pre-  
sent State in this Life, and to make him happy  
in the next. Mean while, let such who repine at  
Providence, for that they suffer, and seem to for-  
get what their Sins do deserve, consider, that  
*though many are called, yet but few are chosen*, and  
consequently that in that corrupt State, into which  
the World is fallen, the wicked and ungodly, the



## 86 *Of the Sufferings of good Men, &c.*

S E R M. unmerciful and unjust, are, beyond all Compari-  
 VIII. son, the more numerous Part of Mankind; and  
 therefore, that it is so far from being strange,  
 that the Just and the Good should be annoyed, and  
 troubled by those who hate them, as the Wolf  
 doth the Sheep, but it is rather wonderful that  
 they do not almost devour them alive, or root  
 them out of the Earth; were it not for the ruling  
 Power of Providence over bad Men, and for the  
 Restraints he keeps them under, and for fear of  
 the Laws of the Community they are Members  
 of. It only remains that

*Thirdly and Lastly, I close all up with some  
 brief Application to ourselves. Let us then, in  
 short, from what has been said, be so far from  
 complaining against the Dispensations of Provi-  
 dence, as rather to submit unto, and to acquiesce  
 in them, seeing the Goodness of God endureth yet  
 daily; let us, and all that is within us, praise his  
 holy Name: Yea, Let us praise the Lord, and not  
 forget his Benefits; for his Mercy endureth for ever:  
 And blessed are they who do his Commandments, that  
 they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may  
 enter in through the Gates into the City, [Jerusalem  
 which is above.] Which God grant for his dear  
 Son's Sake; To whom only wise, be Glory for  
 ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N

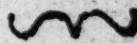
# SERMON IX.

That the Prosperity of many (called the *many* by reason of their Numbers) wicked Men, is what affords no just Impeachment of the Providence of God in this lower World.

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ECCLESIASTES VIII. latter Part  
of the 14th Verse.

— *Again, There be wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous. I said, that this also is Vanity.*

**S**OLOMON, at the Beginning of this SERM.  
Book of the Preacher, shews the Vanity, IX.  
or Emptiness of all Things under the Sun,   
where every Thing is so transitory, and subject  
to so many Changes and Chances, that even this  
very wise Man seemed to be at a Loss for Want  
of Words to shew how vain they are. And in  
the great Variety of Incidents, which he takes  
Notice of, whereby to make good that leading  
Point (aforesaid, or) that *Vanity of Vanities, all is*  
G 4*Vanity,*



# 88 *That the Prosperity of wicked Men,&c.*

S E R M. *Vanity*, Chap. i. 2. There are two Things men-

IX. tioned in the Chapter of which my Text and its  
 Context are some Part, which some weak, and  
 other some, who probably thought themselves  
 over wise, pretended to be offended at, and took  
 upon them to object, and turn against, the good  
 Providence of God. The first, at Verse the 11th,  
 was as followeth, *that because Sentence against an  
 evil Work is not executed speedily; therefore the  
 Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do  
 Evil: (i. e.)* Such vain Men are not moved to look  
 any farther than their own, or other Men's Pro-  
 sperity in this World; and upon a Suspension of  
 the Punishment on the Workers of Iniquity,  
 through the Forbearance of God (though only  
 for a Time, and to bring them to repent and a-  
 mend,) these Miscreants make an ill Use of it, and  
 go audaciously and presumptuously on in their  
 Wickedness, as if there were *no Knowledge in the  
 most high God*; or as he were even such an one as  
 themselves; only because he is not so unmerciful  
 as they would have him be. To this the wise  
 Preacher there replies, Verses 12, 13, *That though  
 a Sinner do Evil an hundred Times, and his Days  
 be prolonged: Yet surely (saith he) I know that it  
 shall be well with them who fear God, who fear be-  
 fore him, (i. e.)* who do chuse rather to suffer  
 than to sin: Mean while, maintaining their Inte-  
 grity, in an awful Submission and Obedience to  
 God, and to his Will and Laws. Whereas, as it  
 follows, *It shall not be well with the Wicked, nei-  
 ther shall he prolong his Days, which are as a Sha-  
 dow [which fleeth and continueth not] because he  
 feareth not before God.* The second Thing, which  
 some have taken Exception at, and urged against  
 Providence,

*That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.* 89

Providence, (even of old) is what *Solomon* hath, S E R M.  
in the Words of my Text and Context, set forth IX.  
in clear Terms: (*viz.*) That the Afflictions of  
*some* just or good Men; and the *Prosperity*, or  
*Impunity* of *some* bad Men, in this World: As if  
the one was *neglected* or overlooked, and the  
other was *favoured*, or at least, more indulged  
by Providence; or rather, according to them,  
as if there were no Providence over all, but every  
Thing fell out by meer *Chance*, or by inevitable  
*Fate*. The Vanity and Absurdity of which,  
in the first Instance, the Adversity of *some* good  
Men, I lately shewed you in a Discourse on the  
former Part of the Verse; in which I endeavoured  
to make it appear, that such Adversity of *some* just  
Persons in this Life, is no Argument against the  
divine Providence, if the End of such Afflictions  
be *well* considered, as it ought to be; and the  
Reasons I then offered in *Vindication* of Pro-  
vidence, be duly weighed and laid together.  
And now, I go on to consider the following  
Words to the End of the Verse. *Again, there*  
*be wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to*  
*the Works of the Righteous: I said, that this also*  
*is Vanity:* (i. e.) It is what seemeth strange to the  
vain Part of Mankind, who look more at the  
Out-side, than consider the Reason, of the Things,  
which they only, as *in passing*, take a transient  
View of. I then laid down the following Posi-  
tion (from the Words now before me;) That the  
Prosperity of *some*, yea, of many wicked Men,  
(being, by Reason of their Numbers, called the  
*many*) affords no just Impeachment of the Pro-  
vidence of God, in this lower World. And in  
order to make good this Point of Doctrine also  
in



90 *That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.*

SER M. in *Vindication* of God's Providence, even supposing  
IX. that what is here said, as concerning the *Adversity*  
of some good, and the *Prosperity* of not a few  
wicked Men, be found true in *Fact*, and *Experience* of this vain World. I shall in my following Discourse attempt to shew,

*First*, That God being most holy in himself, cannot, without Impiety on the Part of the prophane Objectors, be supposed to act contrary to his own Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness. Then,

*Secondly*, I shall enforce all this by some good Reasons: And then farther confirm,

*Thirdly*, The aforesaid Doctrine, by propounding such Considerations also, as will, if duly weighed, enable us to frame a right Judgment, as concerning the *Equality* of God's Ways. And

*Lastly*, For as much as this *present Life* is not the *proper* Season for a final Adjustment of Rewards and of Punishments, in a just Proportion to the *Deserts* of good, or to the *Demerits* of bad Men, (otherwise, *why will*, or rather *how can* God judge all the World at the last Day?) I shall conclude with an Inference or two, and with some brief Application of the whole to our selves. As to the

*First Particular*, so much has already been offered, in some foregoing Discourses, by Arguments

*That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.* 91

ments taken from the divine Nature and Attributes, that I need not repeat the same again, but rather make some Remarks ;

S E R M.  
IX.

1<sup>st</sup>, As to the promiscuous Events of Providence with Relation to just and to wicked Men, in this Life only : and then shew,

2<sup>dly</sup>, That God is righteous in all his Dealings with the sinful Sons of Men. And

1<sup>st</sup>, I observe, that neither is Prosperity a sure and certain Mark of God's Love, or special Favour to one Man, above the rest : Nor is Adversity any infallible Token of God's Displeasure, as to all, upon whom it falleth : No, God forbid ! For, were it so, then all good Men must be alike miserable ; and all wicked Men alike happy, in this World, which noted Experience flatly contradicts. So that the Truth is, that only some of the one, and some of the other, are to be found in each Class ; because Time and Chance happen to them all. And if Man be a free Agent, (as doubtless he is) from whence then can the least Inequality be found in God's Ways ? And if there be none, why then should mortal Man contend with his Maker, or presume to charge God foolishly ? What, (saith the Apostle) is there Unrighteousness with God ? no, God forbid ! Who then art thou, O Man, who repliest against God ? Shall the Thing formed, say unto him who formed it, why hast thou made me thus ? Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay, of the same Lump, to make one Vessel unto Honour, and another unto Dishonour ? What then, if God, who declared of old, that He will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy ; and whom he will, he hardeneth, to answer different Ends of his just Providence in this Life. I say, What



92 *That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.*

SERM. What if God, willing to shew his Wrath, and to  
IX. make his Power known, endured with much Long-  
suffering, the Vessels of Wrath, fitted to Destruction?  
and that he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had afore prepared unto Glory, Rom. ix. from Verse the 20th, to the 24th. Who then but God, can be a proper Judge of the Expediency of all, or of any of his Proceedings? and who can have the Face to find Fault with God for his Patience, Long-suffering, and Forbearance: O shameless Ingratitude! Do ye thus requite the Lord, as a foolish People, and unwise? Deut. xxxii. 6. Consider then.

2dly, That the only Way to escape that infamous Imputation of Ingratitude on our Part, is to acknowledge that God is the Searcher of all Hearts, and spieth out all the Ways of Men; and so he cannot be imposed upon, by the Hypocrite's Arts or Devices: because there is not any Creature that is not manifest in his Sight, who seeth in Secret, and from whose Eyes the Darknes hideth not. And besides, God is no Respector of Persons [He regards not the rich, more than the poor] but in every Nation, he that feareth him, is accepted with him. Once more, God's Words are true, and his Counsels (as well as his Promises) are Faithfulness and Truth, he will say the Word and perform it. Shall mortal Man then, be more just than God? Shall a Man be more pure than his Maker? said Eliphaz, Job iv. 17. Surely nothing less. Let such rather hearken to God himself thus speaking to that perfect and upright Man Job, Chap. xl. 2. Shall the Man who contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? No, Let him

*That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.* 93

him who reproveth God, let him answer it! For, SERM.  
IX.  
the Lord will work, and who shall lett it? who will [presume] to say unto him, *What dost thou?*   
Isaiah xliii, 13. These Scripture-grounds being thus laid down in the Case before us, I am

Secondly, Farther to enforce the same, by one good Reason, which being *instar omnium*, may include many others upon the forementioned Scripture-grounds, and it is This; *That seeing the Foolishness of God* (speaking after the manner of Men) *is wiser than Men: and the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.* It is therefore a most arrogant Presumption in any Child of Man, *impiously to charge* the good Providence of God, either with Inadvertency, or *Malversation*, much less then, with *Partiality*, or Injustice, in his most just and equal Adminstration in this lower World. This is what is undoubtedly *contrary* to all the *impartial* Reason of Mankind; and what can be no Impeachment of the Justice, Wisdom, or Goodness of Providence. And therefore, I shall farther endeavour,

Thirdly, To confirm this Doctrine of my Text and Context by some serious Considerations, the better to enable us to *frame a right Judgment* of the Subject I am now speaking of; adding thereto a few Inferences before I proceed to the Application. And

1<sup>st</sup> then, It concerns us all, with Solomon the wise, to consider in our Hearts, *that the Righteous and the Wise* (however they fare in this World) *and their Works are in the Hand of God: and that no Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that*



94 *That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.*

S E R M. is before him, Eccl. ix. 1. For God's secret  
IX. Counsels are only known to himself; and those

*Things which are revealed, belong to us, Deut. xxix. 29.* It is all in vain then, to think we can fathom the Depth of God's Purposes, or the Ends of his Providence, in making one Man poor, and another rich, or for pulling one down, and setting up another: For here we are all in a State of Trial, and under Discipline: we are yet, as way-faring Men, on the Way, and not at Home where we should be; and it will be then time enough to *dive into the Secrets of the Almighty, when Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life*, and we come to see and to know, *even as we are seen and known.* Mean while, Let it be considered also,

2dly, That as the Men of the World esteem those to be happy, who prosper in the World, and have Riches in Possession, and are not in Trouble, neither plagued, like other Men: So, this was what stagger'd the foolish envious Man, *whose Steps had well nigh slipt, till at last he came, by going to the House of God, to see the End of those Men, Psalm lxxiii. 2. and following Verses, and that soon set him right.* Once more, consider,

3dly, That it really mattereth not, whether more bad than good Men abound in uncertain Riches, *which make to themselves Wings, and do flee away like an Eagle towards Heaven; seeing, when all is said, as our Saviour assures us, Luke xii. 15. Man's Happiness standeth not in the Abundance of the Things which he enjoyeth.* No, Agur's Prayer is extremely good, and to be imitated also, Prov. xxx. 8. *Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches,*

*That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.* 95

*Riches, feed me with Food convenient for me, (i. e.)* S E R M.  
a *Mediocrity, or Competency, or middle State of* IX,  
Life, is the most eligible, because the most se-  
cure State.

4thly and Lastly, Let it be considered likewise, that so much as some do vaunt in their Riches, and are puffed up with the Honours of this World, yet when all is done, these are Things in their own Nature indifferent, temporary, and subject to many Changes and Chances; and therefore, are very uncertain, and chiefly valuable for the good, in the Way of a *charitable* Distribution to the poor and indigent. For otherwise they, *who will be rich, [quo jure, quâve injuriâ, right or wrong] do fall into Temptation and a Snare,* (yea, their Table often proves such unto them) *and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown them in Destruction and Perdition,* 1 Tim. vi. 9. As, on the other hand, God hath chosen the Poor of this World [provided] they be rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which God hath promised to them who love him: or serve, honour, and obey him, in Sincerity, Truth, and Honesty, James ii. 5. Now from what has been said upon this Subject, as to promiscuous Events here below, I infer,

1. That as to the Afflictions of the Righteous, (as God doubtless intends it) much Good cometh thereby, to such who with Patience and Contentment do submit thereto: so, they can have no Reason to complain or murmur against Providence. And

2. As to the Rich, I infer, that as long as they have their Portion here in this World, (in the Way many of them seem to chuse, and best to



# 96 *That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.*

S E R M. to like) let them be silent for Shame ; and when

IX. they come to themselves, and think of another, and more lasting Portion, let them rejoice ; provided that they *be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God ; and if they do good, and be rich in good Works ; they, so doing, do lay up for themselves a good Fund, and may lay hold on eternal Life, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.* I now go on, in the

*Last Place, To apply what has been said, and to conclude. In short, permit an Address, in few Words, to Rich and to Poor. Let the Brother of low Degree rejoice, in that he is exalted ; but the Rich, in that he is made low : (both which sometimes so happen : ) but let both give Glory to God, and be content with the present Things, Heb. xiii. 5. As to the poor Man, (if true and just in his Ways) Solomon saith to his Comfort, That the Fear of the Lord is a strong Confidence, and that it is a Fountain of Life to depart from the Snares of Death, Prov. xiv. 16, 17. I shall conclude with an awakening Word to all uncharitable rich Men, in the Words of Saint James, Chap. v. 1, 2, 5. Go to, ye rich Men, weep and howl, for your Miseries which shall come upon you ; your Riches are corrupted, your Garments moth-eaten ; your Gold and Silver is cankered, and the Rust of them shall be a Witness against you, and shall eat your Flesh as it were Fire ; ye have heaped Treasure together for the last Days, [i. e. to your Condemnation] and ye have lived in Pleasure on the Earth, and been wanton ; ye have nourished your Hearts as in the Day of Slaughter. In fine then, for the Reasons foregoing, neither let the poor Man repine*

*That the Prosperity of wicked Men, &c.* 97

pine at Providence ; nor the rich Man glory in his S E R M.  
*Riches : but let both glory, saith the Lord, in this, IX.*  
*that they understand and know me, who do exercise*  
*Loving-kindness, Judgment, and Righteousness in the*  
*Earth : for in these Things I delight, saith the Lord.*  
To whom be given all Power and Dominion,  
Worship and Adoration, Glory and Praise, from  
Generation to Generation, World without End.  
*Amen.*

**S E R M O N**



# SERMON X.

Some other Cavils of Scoffers against  
Providence answered.

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PROVERBS XV. Part of the 2d. Verse.

—*The Mouth of Fools poureth out Foolish-  
ness.*

The whole Verse runs thus.

*The Tongue of the Wise useth Knowledge  
aright: But the Mouth of Fools poureth  
out Foolishness.*

SERM.  
X.

**S**EEING the main Influence which the Be-  
lief of a God hath upon the Minds of  
Men, proceedeth immediately from the Be-  
lief of his Providence (as one observes;) and  
seeing without a Providence, God (with Re-  
verence be it spoken) would be a solitary  
Being, retired within himself, and so, not  
looking abroad, nor intermeddling with any  
Thing in the World, without, or out of,  
himself: (*i. e.*) He would then be just such an in-  
dolent Being, and void of all Care and Concern  
about his Creatures, as the loose Libertines and  
Infidels have, at all Times, represented God, or  
rather wished him to be; that they may (as they  
do, no doubt, foolishly imagine) go the more un-  
concernedly on in their Sins; scoffing at revealed  
Religion,

Religion, and live as without God in the World. SERM. X.  
 These independent Free-thinkers, and, in their own Conceit, wise and knowing Men, and Masters at Reasoning (or rather go on carping and cavilling at, what they do not, or will not understand;) I say, of these Men it may be said, (upon many Occasions;) *that professing themselves to be wise, they become Fools*, Rom. i. 22. especially when they turn their Reason against that God who gave it to them for much better Purposes, or to employ it to his Glory, and in his Service. For otherwise *the Mouth of (such) Fools poureth out Foolishness*. The Context then, or the whole Verse (as before cited) contains an elegant Antithesis, or Opposition, betwixt two different Parties of Mankind in this lower World; (*i. e.*) the wise or good, and the foolish, wicked, or prophane; and withal shews one notorious Mark of Discrimination in the Conduct of the one Sort, if compared to that of the other, with Relation to useful Science truly so called, and to a superficial Sort of Knowledge, which only puffeth some vain and self-conceited Persons up, out of measure. For only *the Tongues of the wise useth Knowledge aright*: as much as to say, A virtuous, good, and discreet Man, is a Man of an excellent Spirit, or of a good Understanding; and knows how and when to impart his Knowledge to others; so as to render it no less acceptable than useful to them. But *the Fool, (who saith in his Heart there is no God, no Providence)* is so confused in his Thoughts, and so confident and vain in his Imaginations, that his foolish Heart being darkened, only serveth him to proclaim his errant and downright Folly or Unbelief; I say Unbelief, because, as a great Man (to this Effect) observes, “ A poor



SERM. "Smattering in Philosophy is very apt to lead

X.

~ "into it, will, by a Chain of Causes, direct a  
 "wise Man to the first Cause, and the last End  
 "of all Things, even to that supreme Being cal-  
 "led G O D : " in whom all Things do consist,  
 and upon whose Providence every Thing depends.  
 I shall therefore endeavour to vindicate the divine  
 Providence against some Objections or Cavils,  
 raised or urged against it, by such Fools (as *Solo-*  
*mon* in my Text speaks of) whose *Mouths pour*  
*out Foolishness*. And in prosecuting my aforesaid  
 Purpose, I shall observe the following Method.

*First*, I will lay open the most material Ob-  
 jections (other than what, in my former Dis-  
 courses, be already examined) which our mo-  
 dern Unbelievers have urged in Defiance of  
 God's Providence.

*Secondly*, I will attempt to shew the Unreasona-  
 bleness and great Absurdity of those Objec-  
 tions, the better to confirm our Faith and  
 Affiance in God.

*Thirdly and Lastly*, I shall conclude with a se-  
 rious Admonition to all (who hear me) so  
 to believe in God, and to depend upon his  
 Providence, and so to bridle their Tongues,  
 as that they may use Knowledge aright.

I am,

*First*, To lay open the more material Objec-  
 tions (other than what, in my former Discourses,  
 be already examined) which our modern Unbelie-  
 vers have urged in Defiance of God's Provi-  
 dence.

dence. And here, as to such Objections as have S E R M. not hitherto been examined, the more material X. ones (as I think) are these three following.

1<sup>st</sup>, Some pretend, that our received Notion of Providence (according to them, who take upon them to contradict it) is inconsistent with the Happiness and the indolent Ease of God. Then

2<sup>dly</sup>, That such a wise and good Providence as Believers thereof do assert, cannot (say Unbelievers) be consistent with the various Evils both natural and moral, which we see every where abound under the Sun. And

3<sup>dly</sup>, That they think (forsooth) that the very wretched Condition to which the greatest Part of Mankind [such are *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Pagan Infidels*] is abandoned, is in no wise to be reconciled with the Belief of a Providence over all. Now these being the more plausible Pretences which our modern sceptical Libertines have advanced, with a Design to banish God's Providence out of Men's Minds: what I think proper first to do is, in short, to shew what Sort of Men these bold Miscreants are, who do thus impiously fight against God and his good Providence; and an impartial Character being given of them, will yield no small Prejudice against the Foolishness [or prophane Jargon] which *the Mouth of such Fools poureth out*. And

1<sup>st</sup>, Whereas their admired Ring-leader, *Epicurus* affirmed, *Quòd primus in orbe Deos fecit timor*, &c. (i. e. that Men's Fears first introduced the Belief of a God in the World) these Disciples of *Epicurus*, were themselves of old (as *Tully* observed of them) errant Slaves to their Fears, "there being no Sort of Men, who are more

" afraid of God, than those who pretend not to



S E R M. "believe his Being." *De Natura Deorum*, Lib. I.

X. And (as one saith) "they are never free from  
 "dreadful Apprehensions, when alone, or in the  
 "Dark, by themselves." And who do tremble  
 more in a Storm at Sea, or at Thunder and  
 Lightning? Or who is there so much terrified  
 and haunted with Fear (when it is most necessary,  
 were it in the Power of the guilty, to be quiet,  
 and without Fear; I mean than Infidels are in the  
 Time of Sickness, and at the near Approach of  
 Death,) I say, who amongst Men, are so much  
 haunted and terrified upon those Occasions I last  
 mentioned, as Unbelievers generally are? Again,  
 2dly, Another Thing which Scepticks blame  
 all true Believers of a Providence for, is their Cre-  
 dulity, or too easily believing almost (say they)  
 any Thing, without due Examination or Insight  
 into the *credenda*, &c. Now these Objectors,  
 who charge good and religious People with Cre-  
 dulity (though they pretend to avoid that Impu-  
 tation, by their loose Principles and prophane  
 way of Talking, yet) are themselves so ridicu-  
 lously credulous, as to espouse what *Aristotle* ad-  
 vanced about the Eternity of the World; and  
 the foolish Story which *Epicurus* tells, as concern-  
 ing the World's making itself (in Effect) by a ca-  
 sual Concourse of Atoms, or indivisible Parts of  
 Matter: than both Suppositions, nothing can  
 well be more contradictory to sound Reason.  
 So then,

3dly, One may, I think, rationally conclude,  
 that upon all Accounts (as one saith) Atheism  
 may justly be accounted Folly: not only as it is  
 contrary to the Principles of sound Reason (so  
 much claimed by Free-thinkers) but to the Rules  
 of that Wisdom also, whereby *the Tongue of the*  
*Wise*

*Wise useth Knowledge aright; when at the same* S E R M.  
*Time, the Mouth of such Fools as I have even now* X.  
*described, poureth out Folly. Having shewn what*  
*Sort of Men those (in their own fond Conceit)*  
*wise, but (in Solomon's Opinion) are but Fools;*  
*before I proceed farther, I shall only add, that in*  
*Justification of the foregoing Character, should*  
*it be thought too severe, it may, I think, be ex-*  
*cusable, if not only in Solomon's Judgment, but*  
*in Saint Paul's also, it be a true one, with what*  
*the former said of such vain Men, as you have*  
*already been acquainted: and now let what the*  
*learned Apostle Saint Paul saith, 1 Cor. i. be well*  
*considered also; who there addressing himself to*  
*both Jews [and their Scribes, or reputed wise*  
*Men] and to the Greeks [or Gentiles] also, who*  
*both of them thought the preaching of the Cross of*  
*Christ to be Foolishness, Verse 18. Whereupon the*  
*Apostle referred the Jews to a notable Prophecy*  
*of Isaiah, Chap. xxix. 14, 15. I (said God by*  
*that Prophet) will do a marvellous Work and a*  
*Wonder, for the Wisdom of the wise Men shall pe-*  
*rish, and the Understanding of the Prudent shall be*  
*hid. Wo unto them who seek deep to hide their Coun-*  
*sels from the Lord, and say, Who seeth us? Verse*  
*15. Where then (saith the Apostle there) is the*  
*Wise? where is the Scribe? where is the Disputer*  
*of this World? Ver. 20. And why? but for that*  
*the Foolishness of God (to use the Apostle's Word)*  
*is wiser than Men, Ver 25. Whereupon he comes*  
*to this Conclusion in the following Verse: Ye*  
*(therefore) see your Calling, Brethren, how that*  
*not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many migh-*  
*ty, not many noble, are called. But God hath cho-*  
*sen the foolish Things of the World to confound the*



S E R M. *Wise, and the weak Things to confound the Things*  
 X. *which are mighty. Yea, the base and despicable,*  
 and *Things which are not, to bring to nought Things*  
*that are. And all this God doeth to this End,*  
*namely, that no Flesh should glory in his Presence,*  
 Verse 29. I now go on under my

*Second general Head of Discourse, to shew the Unreasonableness and the Absurdity of those three forementioned Objections against Providence, or to consider the Foolishness or Weakness of them. For the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God: because they are [esteemed] Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is pretended then that*

*1st, The Notion of a Providence over all Things, although it is generally received and believed, by Jews and by Christians, yet (say the Objectors) such Notion is inconsistent with the Happiness, and the indolent Ease of God; (i. e.) of a God who is such an one as themselves; or, as if the God, who is happy in himself, and self-sufficient, could, in Derogation to his own infinite Fulness and Perfection, receive any Accession at all, to his most compleat Happiness, and much less in the Way of Indolence as to his Creatures, or his taking no Care of them, nor having any Concern for their Welfare. And if this is not to blaspheme God's Honour, I know not what is so. All this silly Stuff then, is "at best a gross Mistake, arising from Men's measuring God's Ways by their own, whose Minds are so narrow, and whose Power is so limited, that (as a learned Man truly observed) we cannot attend without Distraction to many Things*  
 " at

“ at once.” But that God cannot, because no SERM.  
 Creature can do so, is what none but a Fool, or X.  
 a Madman will dare to affirm, upon serious  
 Thought. Again

2dly, What is farther objected by others, (*i. e.*)  
 that a wise and good Providence cannot (say they)  
 be consistent with the many various Evils both  
 natural and moral too, which do every where so  
 abound in this lower World : If (say they) there  
 is a merciful and gracious Providence which over-  
 ruleth the World, how can it be supposed, that  
 so many and grievous Calamities and Miseries as  
 befall Mankind, should be inflicted by its Suffer-  
 ance ? or how could so many great Irregularities  
 in Men’s Lives be permitted thereby ? I answer,  
 that first, as to the moral Evils committed by the  
 Sons of Men ; these are the enormous Sins, into  
 which all the Posterity of the first Transgressors  
 (one only excepted) have fallen, and thereby be-  
 came obnoxious to Punishment ; as Man hath yet  
 left some Freedom of Will, with a corrupt Na-  
 ture, which by its very seminal Principles, com-  
 municated from the Parents to their Off-spring,  
 not a few natural Evils, Diseases, and Maladies,  
 do likewise proceed, and therewith much Trou-  
 ble and Pain, which not seldom do shorten their  
 Days : And for the rest, surely God may justly  
 punish such who deserve it, and be clear when  
 he is judged ; without being asked by his Crea-  
 tures [Angels or Men] *What doest thou ? What !*  
*Shall not the Judge of the whole Earth do right ?*  
 Gen. xviii. 25. Yea, he has declared that he,  
*without Respect of Persons, will render to every*  
*one according to their Deeds, whether good or bad.*  
 But

3dly, Others



SERM. 3dly, Others presume to say, that the wretched  
 X. State that the far greater Part of Mankind, all  
 ~~~~~ *Jews, Mahometans, and Pagan Infidels* are even  
 hitherto found to continue in, is what (say they)
 is in no wise to be reconciled with the Belief of
 a wise, good, and watchful Providence. To
 which, I conceive, as God's Ways are far above,
 and out of our Sight, it therefore may suffice to
 reply,

1st, That the Concession of modern Infidels,
 that the State of the forementioned Unbelievers
 (some of whom probably do believe a Provi-
 dence) is a wretched Condition, is, I think, a
 good Reason why they who form this Objection,
 should esteem themselves, if not in so bad, yet
 but in a little better Condition, upon Account of
 their own Infidelity: Yea rather,

2dly, That the latter may expect to fare much
 worse than the former, at the Judgment of the
 great Day, for the following Reasons.

1st, Because these do offend against a greater
 and clearer Light, That of divine Revelation,
 than those Pagan-Infidels can sin against, as be-
 ing conducted only by their blinded Reason, and
 by the Law of Nature. And

2dly, Because, in such Case, they who can see
 the Truth, but will not, are the more inexcusable
 (no doubt) in the Sight of God than others, who
 are (as it were) born blind. *For that Servant who
 knew his Lord's Will, but did not according to his
 Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes. Whereas,
 he who knew not, and did commit Things worthy of
 Stripes, shall be beaten with few, Luke xii. 47, 48.*
 And our Saviour farther assured the incredulous
*Jews, that it should be more tolerable for Tyre and
 Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomerrah at the last
 Day,*

Day, than for them who stood out in their Un-S E R M. belief, and sinned against their own Souls in op- X. posing him, his Miracles, and Doctrine, even against Conviction of many of them (no doubt.) So that from the foregoing Reasons, as to the last Objection (and from what has been said against the two preceding ones at this Time) I conclude, that neither the one nor the other, are any Arguments against God's Providence in the World, which continually displays itself in all Places, and extends itself unto every Creature; as I have at large shewn before. Therefore,

Thirdly and Lastly, It remains, that upon closing up this most useful Subject, as concerning Providence, the Belief whereof so happily influenceth the Minds of Men, as to dispose them to believe in God, to fear before him, and to become sincerely religious also; for the forementioned Reasons, Let me admonish and beseech you, to depend upon God's Providence in any Distress you may fall under; and to learn to bridle your Tongue, so as that it may use *Knowledge aright, and not pour out Foolishness*. In a Word, the Name of God (which is God himself) and of his Providence over all, is so much the same in Scripture-language, that he who knows the one, cannot be excusably ignorant of the other; and consequently is bound in Duty to profess openly, his firm Belief of Both, considering how necessary such Belief is to our being truly religious, and how forcibly the Evidence it proceeds from (as has been shewn before) is, as being such, as cannot but affect all sober and considerate Minds, and move them to yield to their reasonable Hopes and Fears, which wonderfully influence both our Faith

SERMON. Faith and Practice too. So then, would we (as
X. a learned Man speaks) "fix the Obligations of

~ "Religion in our Minds, we must, above all
"Things, endeavour to look thoroughly into
"the Nature, and to be confirmed also in the
"Belief, of the divine Providence.

To God only wise, be given all Power, Do-
minion, Glory and Majesty, Worship and
Praise, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XI.

Of the Danger any particular Church may be exposed unto, by Infidelity and Popery; and how a Christian indeed ought to stand in the Defence of the Christian Religion by all lawful Ways and Means.

P S A L M XI. 3.

If the Foundation be destroyed, what can the Righteous do?

I Have in the foregoing Discourses endeavoured to shew you (notwithstanding the Efforts of the incredulous to the contrary, yet) that the Providence of God is the principal Asylum, Safe-guard, or sure Refuge for all good Men to flee unto, for Help in any needful Time of Trouble; and for Protection from the Insults also of the Enemies of the Church of God, and of the true Religion; who attempt to raze the Foundation of the former, and to ridicule and expose the latter as much as they can. I therefore did think good to farther make you sensible of the

S E R M.
XI.

S E R M. the pernicious Designs of Unbelievers, and of the
 XI. fatal Consequences of their fallacious Reasonings,
 (where they are hearkened unto) to undermine Both. I say then, in order to prevent such their
 Designs, and to perswade you to avoid the ill
 Consequences of giving into them; I thought
 good to add the Subject I am now entering up-
 on, as a proper Appendix to my said foregoing
 Discourses, for the Reasons I even now made
 mention of. For if *the Foundation be destroyed,*
what can the Righteous do? And here, before I
 come to consider the Words, and for the better
 Application of them; I crave your Patience to
 premise,

1st, Before-hand; That albeit the Church uni-
 versal being built on the Foundation of the Apostles
 and Prophets, whereof Jesus Christ himself is the
 chief Corner-stone, Eph. ii. 20. is in Virtue of his
 Promise, so built on a Rock, as never to fail till
 the End of all Things, Matt. xxviii. 20. Yet it is
 true in Fact, that any particular Church may fail,
 (because many such have failed;) witness the once
 seven famous Churches of *Asia*, and the renown-
 ed Churches of *Africa* also, which now are not.
 And thus it may be with any other particular
 Church, while a most just God, who governeth
 the World when he is provoked to Wrath, by
 any sinful People laden with Iniquity, who obsti-
 nately go on in their Sins, and refuse to return,
 repent, and reform: I say, that though God
 may, in Mercy, bear long with such a People;
 yet will he at last avenge himself on them, if
 they stand out in their Impenitency; and that ei-
 ther by sending on them a Famine of the Word,
 or by suffering their Enemies to take away the
 Hedge, or to break down the Wall, of his once
 pleasant

pleasant Vineyard, and thereby laying it waste S.E.R.M. 2
and desolate; or finally, by utterly removing their XI.

Candlestick out of its Place. Now though the same or like Causes may, any where, produce the same or like Effects (even, in natural Equity, as well as by the Law of God) and though I cannot but with Abhorrence, on the one hand, mention how this sinful Nation has twice, in the last Age (in about Forty-eight Years) by woful Experience found it, as I said, true. 1st, When by an unnatural Rebellion, the Government both in Church and State was quite overturned, and Anarchy and Confusion ensued; and as the Consequence of that Wickedness, 2^{dly}, When the then two next Heirs to the Crown were actually perverted to the Church of Rome, and (though acting covertly for some Years, yet) openly upon many Occasions, at last adhered to the Popish Interest, to the great Hurt, or extreme Hazard of their own Subjects, and at long-run, by Jesuitical Councils, and an illegal Administration in the State, all was, in a few Years, brought to the very Brink of Ruin, or very near to a fatal Crisis, both in Church and State. Which albeit I put you in Mind of, with Horror: Yet, the wonderful, and (almost) miraculous Deliverances out of both those most dreadful Shocks, call aloud upon us, for our most hearty Gratitude and Praise to the great Governour of the World for his unspeakable Benefits, who *plucked us as a Firebrand out of the Burning*, Amos iv. 11. Howsoever, I do here solemnly farther premise and declare,

2^{dly}, That I do not in the least intimate (nor so much as think) that our Church is in Danger under (or much less from) the present Administration; but that all the Distress she may fall into,

S. E. R. M. is chiefly owing to the Want of that godly primitive Discipline in our Church, which she has long wished may again be restored: And not without Reason, considering what a Torrent of Errors in the Faith, once delivered unto the Saints, by the Revival of many antient Heresies, and a Superfétation of some new ones, are sprung up in our Days; and what an unruly Spirit of Libertinism is of late Years let loose amongst us, through the forementioned Deficiency of an wholesome Discipline in our Church, to the great Decay of true Christian Piety; under Pretence of setting up a Religion of Nature (called by some Infidels of late, the Golden Religion) but in Reality to supplant the Christian Revelation, and thereby to, *Ezek. xxi. 27. overturn, overturn, overturn*, the true Church of Christ in the World. So that under such deplorable Circumstances, the Words of holy *David* in his Distress, may, I hope, without Offence, be taken into our Consideration; to forewarn some lukewarm, and other indolent People, of the real Danger we are in: and to shew all, who wish well to our established Church, how to behave themselves with Patience, Prudence, and with such a Zeal for our common Mother, as may render our Prayers and lawful Endeavours acceptable in the Sight of God, and through the Intercession and Merits of Jesus Christ, be efficacious to preserve his little Flock till the End of the World. But mean while, if the Foundations [thereof, be in Danger of being] destroyed, it nearly concerns the Righteous to consider, on their Part, as well what they can do [for the Support] as wicked and ungodly Men do, on their Part, to demolish them. *If the Foundations be destroyed, what can the*

Righteous do? In discoursing on which Words, I shall enquire, S E R M.
XI.

First, From what Quarters the Danger of sapping the Foundations of our Church, and the opposing the fundamental Principles of the Doctrine of Christ doth chiefly proceed? I say chiefly, because I do not pretend to enumerate all, or every one. *If the Foundations, &c.* And

Secondly, I shall then consider, what good Men, or true Christians, in such Case, are to do, and how to behave themselves so as to give no just Cause of Offence, even when the Floods of ungodly Men do so rage, as sometimes to make them afraid. *What can the Righteous do?*

Lastly, I shall conclude all with some Application to our selves. I am to enquire in the

First Place, from what Quarters the Danger of sapping the Foundations of our Church, and the opposing the fundamental Principles of the Doctrine of Christ doth chiefly proceed? And here in general I observe

I. That albeit the true Church of God hath sometimes had her calm Days of Peace and Tranquillity, and then flourished as a green Bay-tree, as in the Days of *Constantine* the first Christian Emperor, she took Root downward, and did bear Fruit upward: yet hath she in most Ages undergone many heavy Storms of Persecution and Adversity, and so has, like the Bush which *Moses* saw in the Desert, been always, in a Manner, burning; yet, blessed be God, she

S E R M. even yet continueth, like that, unconsumed. I

XI. observe

2. Farther yet, that the *If* in my Text, *non est vox dubitantis, sed ratiocinantis*, doth not imply any Doubt in the Thing spoken of, but is the same as [for as much as] the Foundations are in Jeopardy. This being thus premised; I proceed to shew you how, or by what Means, the Foundations of our holy Faith, and consequently of our particular Church as by Law established, may be in Danger of being destroyed: And this Danger chiefly springs

1st, From Apostacy from All, or from a flat Denial of Some of the fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith.

2^{dly}, From that licentious Corruption of Manners, or practical Infidelity or Immorality, which are become (as it were) the Complexion of the loose Age we live in.

3^{dly}, From the surprizing Growth or spreading of Idolatry and Superstition, I mean of Popery, in this unhappily divided Kingdom, and the restless Endeavours of their Missionaries, of late especially, to propagate the one, and keep up, and widen, the other; to the great Prejudice of the reformed Religion which we do profess, and which, I pray God, we may all firmly adhere unto. But

1st, The faithful are minished from among the Children (of God, as well as) of Men, by Apostacy from All, and by a flat Denial of Some of the fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith; as both do tend to undermine its very Foundations. On the other hand, nothing, in our Power, doth so effectually promote the Interest of our holy Religion, as a stedfast and unshaken Adherence

to

to the Doctrine and Principles of Christianity: *S E R M.*
nor is there scarce any Thing that layeth us more *XI.*
open to the Will of its Enemies, than a Levity
of Mind, and a wavering and unconstant Tem-
per, which carry a Man, now this Way, and
anon that Way; so that he fixeth no where, till
at length, it is great Odds, but it endeth either
in Atheism, or in Popery. Such is the Impru-
dence (to say no worse of it) of some: and no
less ruinous is the Conduct of many of the Dispu-
ters of this World, to the Cause of Christianity
in general; and destructive also to the true Inte-
rest of all the reformed Churches, than for pro-
fessed Christians and Protestants to fall out one
with another, by needless Disputes and Wrangling
about the Out-skirts of Religion, which seldom
fail to create Divisions, and not seldom to engen-
der Heresies also, in the Church of Christ, dis-
turbng its good Order, despising its publick Or-
dinances, and having a Tendency to Confusion,
and to utter Destruction at last. For Errors in
Faith are apt so to corrupt Men's Minds, as at
last to lead many unthinking People, into Errors
in Practice also, as Experience testifies. And so
again, Errors in Practice, or a bad Life, or a
vicious and immoral Conversation, is most an end
productive of Infidelity and Prophaneness. But
next I come to shew,

2^{dly}, How the Foundations aforementioned
are endangered also, through the licentious bad
Lives, and loose and immoral Behaviour, of no-
minal Christians, who (to their Shame be it spo-
ken) do walk as the Enemies of the Cross of
Christ, whose End (unless they do repent, and
reform, or amend) is (*i. e.* otherwise will be) De-
struction, because their Belly is their God, their

S E R M. Glory is (in) their Shame, and they do mind

XI. earthly Things, *Philip*, iii. 18, 19. (i. e.) are impious, sensual, earthly-minded. This same Wisdom is also called by Saint *James*, *devilish*, as it descendeth not from above, but is from beneath, as being full of envying and Strife, it is productive of Confusion, and of every evil Work, *Chap.* iii. 15, 16. and consequently is as pernicious to all Society, Peace, and Order, in Government both ecclesiastical and temporal: as the Wisdom that is from above, being peaceable, gentle, placable, full of good Fruits, without wrangling and double Dealing also; is the great Support, yea, the Stability of Government in Church and State, and what secures the Foundations of Both from the Insults of the Sons of *Be-lial*: And for the Truth of this, I dare appeal to the Experience of the World, and to the very Reason and Nature of the Thing. But farther yet,

3dly, Another great Danger to our Foundations in Relation not only to our established Church and reformed Religion, but to our civil Rights, our Laws and Liberties, Root and Branch, is the surprizing Growth of Popish Idolatry and Superstition, and the restless Endeavours of their Missionaries in City and Country, in seducing our People from our Communion into their Church; to the strengthening their Party, by adding very considerable Numbers thereto, and to a proportionable Diminution and Weakening of our's. This hath alarmed the Nation of late, and very deservedly too; seeing every one so deluded by them, is, in Effect, a Subject lost to our Sovereign Lord the King, as having transferred his or her Obedience *in sacris*, to the Pope and his Under-

Under-agents; and their Allegiance to a Pretender (who is brooding under the Pope's Wing at *Rome*) and who lays claim to the Crown of these Kingdoms. Beside, the Romanists do take upon them to unchurch us, as Hereticks, in their Esteem; and as such, do curse and excommunicate us, by Bell, Book, and Candle, at least once every Year. And how inhumanly the Protestants abroad, under Popish Princes are used, I doubt not, but some of you have heard; and what base Returns, for their being connived at here to worship God in private, and in their own Way, they every where make us, is notorious in Fact. The great Men of our Nation begin to be well apprized of this Danger, as appears from a late very loyal Address of the Representative-body of the Clergy of the Province of *Canterbury*, now assembled in Convocation, to the King's Majesty, setting forth the Danger aforesaid, from the insolent Behaviour of the Jesuits, and other Popish Priests, in Defiance of our Laws; and from our gracious Sovereign's Answer to that Address; in which his Majesty promised to countenance and encourage the Clergy, in their just Endeavours to countermine the Designs of their Popish Adversaries, which it must (for Want of Time) suffice at present just to mention, as concerning the Dangers which may threaten the Foundations of the true Religion of any particular true Church of Christ, while militant here upon Earth, and our's also. I now come

Secondly, To shew you what the Righteous can do, when compassed about with, and persecuted by wicked Men; or how good Men, when under undeserved ill Treatment by bad Men, ought

Such ought to behave themselves in any evil Day,
XI. as not to give any just Cause of Offence to their
 Christian Brethren, whereby they may stumble
 and fall. Now here the Scripture-rules following
 will not only answer the Question, *What can the
 Righteous do?* But may serve also

Lastly, As a suitable Application to the fore-
 going Discourse. Well then, and in the general,
Hear the Rod, and who appoints it, Micha vi. 9.
 But murmur not against Providence, rather de-
 pend thereon patiently and with Submission, and
 in a good Hope, *Cast thy Care upon God, who*
careth for thee! Yea, put thy Trust in the Lord,
and do Good! Delight in him, and he will give thee
thy Heart's Desire! Commit thy Way unto the Lord,
and put thy Trust in him; and he shall make thy
Righteousness as clear as the Light, and thy just
Dealing as the Noon Day, Psalm xxxvii. 3. more
 particularly, and

2dly, Remember, that *Preces et Lachrymæ,*
 Prayers and Tears were the Arms which the pri-
 mitive Christians made Use of, when all the se-
 cular Powers upon Earth sought their utter Ex-
 termination and Ruin, and to sap the Foundati-
 ons of the Christian Church; whereupon they en-
 gaged the good Providence of God to stand up
 in their Defence, and to frustrate the wicked Pur-
 poses of their bloody Persecutors, and to preserve
 his little Flock in the World even to this Day.
 But though our Case can (it is hoped) never be so
 bad, as theirs: Yet, by Way of Prevention,
 Let us repent of our crying national Sins, and
 amend our evil Ways, and turn to the Lord ear-
 ly, while he may be found, and call upon him,
while he is near, Isaiah lv. 6. that Iniquity may
 not

not be our Ruin. And if at any Time the Floods SERM.
of the ungodly do so swell against us (as I shew- XI.
ed hath happened in Times past to this sinful Na-
tion) as to make us afraid; Let us humble our
selves before the Lord, in our Distress, or in
any Day of publick Calamity, that in due Time
he may lift us up. In a Word, our holding the
Mystery of the Faith also in a pure Conscience,
which is void of Offence, will contribute much
unto the lengthening of our Tranquility, and the
Security of our Borders, and to the Stability of
our Church and Religion. To which good Ends
that we may be of good Comfort, let us be of
one Mind, and let us live in Peace [one with
another] and the God of Love and Peace shall
be with us.

*To him be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and
Power, now and evermore, Amen.*

F I N I S.

any particular Church, &c.

not be our Reason. And if at any Time the Flood
of the Ungodly do so swell against us (as I shew-
ed hath happened in Times past to this kind of
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To him be Glory and Majesty Dominions and
Power, now and evermore Amen.

D. I. W. I. 3

